

## Foundations Lesson 1

### Light Shining out of Darkness

By William Cowper

- ☐ God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

### Vocabulary for William Tell

**tyrannical** (adjective) ruling harshly; despotic

*The tyrannical monarch imprisoned or killed those in his own kingdom who disagreed with him.*

**patriotism** (noun) love for one's own country

*The Fourth of July is a day in which many Americans show their patriotism by having cookouts and attending parades.*

**avenge** (verb) to take revenge; to return evil for evil

*We should not avenge our enemies, but return good for evil.*

**revolt** (verb) to go against an authority

*The hungry peasants revolted against their landlords.*

**apply** (verb) to put something, such as effort, time, or money, toward a purpose

*I'd like to apply this special money to the missions!*

**resolution** (noun) determination; strength of mind to do something

*Do you have the resolution to finish the long, hard project?*

**protagonist** (noun) the main character of a story who has a "struggle," often called the hero

*The protagonist of the story is Gareth.*

**antagonist** (noun) a character in a story who struggles against another

*In the end of the story the antagonist is defeated by the hero.*

**formidable** (1: adjective) threatening (2: adjective) hard to do or hard win over in a fight

*(1) The protagonist faced the formidable foe and defeated him.*

*(2) It's a formidable task to write a list of all the things I want for my birthday!*

**self-sacrificing** (adjective) giving up one's own comfort, possessions, or even life for another person or for a cause

*The self-sacrificing king lost his life to save his kingdom.*

**feat** (noun) something hard to do

*The acrobats performed their feat on the tightrope.*

**apt** (adjective) fitting; suitable

*Even though he is the younger John in the family, Little John is not a very apt name for the boy because he is six feet, five inches tall.*

**Germany** (noun) a nation in Europe that was founded in the 1800's, once made up of small princedoms.

*Germany was divided into two nations after World War II, but reunited about fifty years later.*

**Swiss** (1: adjective) native of the European country of Switzerland (2: adjective) describing anything or anybody that is of or from Switzerland

*(1) The Swiss are known for their excellent banking system.*

*(2) Where did you buy that Swiss army knife?*

**spare** (verb) to refrain from harming; to save

*The villain asked the knight to spare his life.*

### **Vocabulary Exercise: Suggesting a Word**

Write down the word from the word bank suggested by the sentences below.

**Word Bank:** spare, patriotism, resolution, protagonist, tyrannical, avenge, revolt, apt, self-sacrificing, feat, Swiss

**Example:** The nation's flag—a field of red with a white cross in the center—flapped in the breeze.

**Answer:** *Swiss*

1. On the Fourth of July the audience broke out into a passionate singing of "America, the Beautiful."
2. The hero of the *Odyssey* is Odysseus, who must struggle against many adversaries before he reaches his home in Ithica.
3. The strong man was able to pull the huge vehicle with his teeth.
4. Each year on January 1, Bob determined that he would not spend so much money on unnecessary things, but he never had the strength of mind to follow through.

5. Linda's two brothers gave up their time and some of their money to help their sister fix her bicycle.
6. The ruthless king cruelly executed his political enemies and taxed the people beyond their ability to pay.
7. The boy was not in the habit of forgiving those who wronged him, but instead sought to get even.
8. The members of the team banded together and said they would not obey the captain's rules.
9. Sam gave a very appropriate present to his sister; instead of giving a tool set—which he would have liked—, he gave a doll.
10. The fallen knight begged his enemy to have mercy and not to kill him.

### **Introduction to William Tell**

The *William Tell* Overture, written by the composer Gioachino Rossini, is just as famous or more famous today than the actual story of the Swiss hero. The famous motif was played as the theme for an American weekly children's show called the "Lone Ranger." The Swiss hero apparently lived in the Middle Ages, sometime around the thirteenth century. The German Romantic writer Friedrich Schiller wrote a drama about the hero, which also became famous.

### **The Story of William Tell**

When the Emperor Albert ruled over Germany, he wanted to break the independent spirit of the Swiss people. To do this he appointed a governor who treated the Swiss unjustly and cruelly. The name of this man was Gessler.

In order to test the people's obedience, Gessler placed his hat on a pole in the market square of one of the principal towns, and commanded that everyone who passed it had to bow down before it as a sign of respect. A certain brave Swiss, named William Tell, refused to obey such an absurd order. He was at once arrested and taken before Gessler.

The tyrant knew Tell was a clever archer and said that his life would be spared only if he should with an arrow hit an apple placed on the head of his only son. Tell's aim was good, so he agreed to the horrible proposal.

An apple then was placed on the head of the archer's little son. Tell took his bow and quiver, and prepared to take aim. A moment later the apple split in two halves and fell to the ground.

Gessler was enraged at Tell's success. But he noticed that Tell carried another arrow under his cloak. "What do you have a second arrow for?" he demanded.

“If I had killed my boy,” replied the bold Swiss, “the second arrow was for you.”  
The angry governor threw him into prison, but Tell escaped, and revenged himself by killing the tyrant.

### Multiple-Choice Questions on “William Tell”

1. The word “spirit” in the first sentence most nearly means \_\_\_\_.
  - a) spirituality
  - b) love
  - c) foolishness
  - d) tyranny
  - e) will
2. According to the story, which of the following best describes the Emperor Albert of Germany?
  - a) humorous
  - b) humble
  - c) daring
  - d) obedient
  - e) tyrannical
3. The word “principal” in the second paragraph most nearly means \_\_\_\_.
  - a) head of school
  - b) rule to follow
  - c) ancient
  - d) chief
  - e) one of the first that was built
4. Which of the following best identifies the purpose of the second arrow in William Tell’s cloak?
  - a) to disguise
  - b) to revolt
  - c) to reward
  - d) to avenge and kill
  - e) to apply
5. The Swiss people are characterized in the story as \_\_\_\_.
  - a) ignorant
  - b) wealthy
  - c) angry
  - d) cowardly

- e) freedom-loving
1. What caused Gessler to be “enraged”?
    - a) William Tell was leading a revolt against the Germans.
    - b) William Tell split the apple and did not receive the cruel punishment Gessler had devised for him.
    - c) William Tell proved himself a better marksman than himself and was jealous at his success.
    - d) William Tell had tricked Gessler with the first arrow.
    - e) Gessler knew that William Tell had hidden a second arrow to hit the apple again if he had missed.
  2. Which of the following best explains why Gessler’s proposal is described as “horrible”?
    - a) It was much too demanding to ask any archer to hit such a small object at such a far distance.
    - b) Gessler had expected William Tell to hit his own son as punishment for his unwillingness to submit to German authority.
    - c) Gessler was a better archer than Tell and could have hit the apple himself.
    - d) William Tell was a good archer and would be able to hit the apple.
    - e) The apple could have been eaten by the poor.
  3. Apparently, the setting of the story is at a time when Switzerland was \_\_\_\_.
    - a) a larger country than Germany
    - b) free
    - c) under German rule
    - d) ruled by William Tell
    - e) governed by wise and temperate rulers
  4. According to the story, why did the Emperor Albert appoint Gessler over the Swiss people?
    - a) It is stated that the Emperor was a relative of Gessler.
    - b) Gessler was the only apt governor.
    - c) It had been proven that the Swiss people only responded to cruelty because they were so hardened and cruel themselves.
    - d) The Emperor thought he could make them obedient by treating them cruelly.
    - e) The Emperor thought Gessler was a kind governor.
  5. In this story William Tell is portrayed as \_\_\_\_.
    - a) the protagonist of the story
    - b) a hero
    - c) an antagonist to the Germans.

- d) an antagonist to Gessler and the Emperor
- e) all of the above

### **Literary Terms: Hero**

In this famous story about a Swiss archer named William Tell, we have a very likable portrait of a hero. Heroes in literature are men (women are called *heroines*) who through their extraordinary strength and bravery take a self-sacrificing risk to win against a formidable enemy. The “enemy” that the hero must struggle against might be a villain whose strength very few can overcome. It also might be a thing and not a person, such as an animal, a monster, nature or the hero’s own flaws or circumstances. We often classify these different struggles or conflicts as “man against man,” “man against his environment,” and “man against himself.” Which one of the three categories of conflicts does the story of William Tell fit? How was he brave? What was his strength? What did he risk? (Answer each question in one sentence.)

In one famous story titled *Beowulf*, the first epic written in the English language, the hero is a warrior who must fight against three horrible monsters. The first is a giant that lives in a swamp named Grendel, the second, the monster’s mother who takes revenge, and the third a fire-breathing dragon. The hero of the story, named Beowulf, is able to defeat the first two terrible monsters with his enormous strength, thereby saving the Danish king Hrothgar’s kingdom. In the end of the story, he must save his own kingdom by doing battle against a dragon that is burning down the kingdom’s villages. It is a difficult feat, because he is old, and all but one of his warriors have deserted him. He defeats the dragon, however, and gets treasure from the serpent’s hoard for his people. He dies, but he is happy, as he has done good for his people. Thus, Beowulf demonstrates all the important aspects of a hero: strength, bravery, and self-sacrificing risk.

### **For Further Study**

The German playwright Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) wrote a work titled *William Tell* (1804), which retells the exciting story of the Medieval archer in drama form. Originally written in German, the dramatic poetry of Schiller’s classic has been translated for English readers.

About a quarter century after Schiller wrote his drama, Italian composer Giacchino Rossini (1792–1868) wrote an opera that continues to be popular today, especially the overture, which has been used over and over again, such as in cartoons and the television series, *The Lone Ranger*.

## Grammar and Punctuation 1

### The Sentence

A sentence is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate and expresses a complete thought. The subject answers the question *who or what the sentence is about*, while the predicate finishes the sentence and contains the verb. In the following sentence, the complete subject is underlined once and the predicate is italicized.

The angry customers *walked out of the store.*

Who or what is the sentence is about? *The angry customers*. You will notice that the predicate *walked out of the store* finishes the sentence and contains the verb *walked*. When they are together, the subject and predicate express a complete thought. Can you tell which of the following are sentences? Be careful!

- (a) The beautiful roses on the table in the foyer.
- (b) Were playing in the playground.
- (c) Inside the bright, cheerful room.
- (d) When Fred took the time to help his brother.
- (e) My grandmother from Ohio will be visiting us next week.
- (f) Look!

Letters *e* and *f* are sentences because they contain a subject and predicate and express a complete thought. The rest are fragments. Sentence (b) is missing a subject; (a) is missing a predicate, (c) is missing both; and d) does not express a complete thought. Even though the last sentence (f), which is a command, looks as if it is missing a subject, the subject is the understood “you.” All commands contain the understood “you.”

It can be more difficult to find the subject and predicate in a question; however, if the question is rephrased as a statement, the task becomes just as easy. In fact, when parsing a sentence,<sup>1</sup> always make sure that you are working from sentences worded as statements.

### Exercise 1.1

Memorize the definition of a sentence: *a group of words that contains a subject and verb and expresses a complete thought.*

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<sup>1</sup> “To parse a sentence” means to look at a sentence very closely in order to discover and describe the function of each of its words.

## Exercise 1.2

Underline the complete subject once and put brackets around the complete predicate in the following sentences. If it is a question, reword it so that it is a statement.

EXAMPLE 1. Did John's sister bite into the apple.

Answer: John's sister [did bite into the apple].

EXAMPLE 2. Excited about the coming party, Asa and his brother Jack ran out into the backyard.

Answer: Excited about the coming party, Asa and his brother Jack [ran out into the backyard].

1. The maple grove in her backyard is stunning in the autumn.
2. The winter sun sets very early in the far north.
3. Did you hear the news of her success?
4. The weary soldier dismounted from his black horse.
5. Did the mother across the street give birth to twins?
6. Join the club!
7. The performer bowed before the audience.
8. Did Anna lock the door last night?
9. We gripped the sides of the railing.
10. After Kevin's comment, the room became silent.

### Simple Subjects and Simple Predicates

A simple subject is the noun or pronoun within the complete subject that controls the verb, while the simple predicate is the verb within the complete predicate.

Tom's little brother [was eating a bowl of creamy oatmeal with almonds and apple slices].

In the above sentence the complete subject has been underlined once and the complete predicate has been placed in brackets. The simple subject and verb have been printed in italics. To avoid wordiness and confusion, the simple subject from now on will be called the *subject*, and the simple predicate *verb*.

Sometimes there is more than one subject in a sentence, in which case, we say that the sentence has a *compound subject*. The following sentence below has two subjects: Maria and Anna.

Maria and Anna did not like the weather in Florida.



### Exercise 1.3

Write out the subjects and verbs. An example has been provided for you.

EXAMPLE 1. Where do you and your friend wait for the bus?

*Answer: "You" and "friend" are the simple subjects. (It is a compound subject.) "Do wait" is the verb.*

EXAMPLE 2. Who won the contest?

*Answer: "Who" is the subject and "won" is the verb.*

1. Connor's neighbor heard the wood thrushes in the yard.
2. When did Malcolm hear the news about the classical music concert?
3. The coconut stain on his silk tie on the shirt vanished with the cleaning solution.
4. In a moment's notice Isaiah and his friend entered the field.
5. The old dying president of the country met in public for the last time.
6. The little girl's eyes widened in wonder at the present.
7. Who threw the ball into the garden?
8. The line of student archers put arrows in their bows.
9. She combed her long blond hair.
10. The wrinkled old man leant on his cane.

## Poetry and Poetics 1

### Defining Poetry

Poetry . . . may be defined to be “the expression of the imagination.”

—Percy Bysshe Shelley

For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.

—William Wordsworth

Epic poetry and tragedy, [and] comedy are all . . . modes of imitation.

—Aristotle

[A] long poem does not exist.

It has been assumed . . . that the ultimate object of all Poetry is Truth. Every poem, it is said, should [teach a moral] and by this moral is the [worth] of the work to be adjudged. . . . But the simple fact is that . . . there neither exists nor *can* exist any work more thoroughly dignified.

—Edgar Allan Poe

Among the Romans a poet was called *vates*, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or prophet . . . And may not I presume a little farther to show the reasonableness of this word *vates*, and say, that the holy David’s Psalms are a divine poem?

—Philip Sydney

The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem.

—Walt Whitman

### The Problem of Defining Poetry

Can you say exactly what a poem is? If you think you can, maybe you ought to think again. Since the days of the Ancient Greeks, great thinkers have been trying to define poetry, but have failed to do so satisfactorily. Read the above quotations, taken from just a few great poets and thinkers. All of them seem to express a different, even contrary, idea of what a poem is. Shelley says that poetry is the expression of the *imagination*, while Wordsworth says that poetry chiefly involves our *emotions*. The Greek poet Aristotle defined poetry as an imitation and used long poems such as epics and dramas as examples, but Edgar Allan Poe said that there was no such thing as a long poem. While Philip Sydney believed that poetry could, like the words of a holy prophet, bring heavenly truth to mankind, Poe said that beauty, not truth, was a poem’s main concern. The last quotation is from the American poet Walt Whitman who makes the very confusing remark that the United States was the greatest poem. A poem is a country—what was *he* thinking?

It becomes clear after we read these quotations that at least one reason why the great thinkers of the past have failed to agree on one working definition of poetry is

they all have something specific in mind when they use the term *poem*. Poets such as William Wordsworth, Philip Sydney, Robert Frost and Edgar Allan Poe felt that a poem is defined by its regular rhythm. They would not have considered much of Walt Whitman's works poetry, as much of it does not have any regular rhythm. In order to come up with a definition of something, then, we first have to agree on what that something is. If we are to come up with the definition for *bear*, for instance, we need to know what kind of bear we are talking about—a grizzly bear, polar bear, or black bear—and likewise, if we are to come up with a definition of poetry, we need to agree on its form. Is it a long story poem like an epic, or short and introspective poem like a lyric? Since poets and critics cannot agree on the form and purpose of poetry, there will never be one conclusive definition.

### The Purpose of Poetry

Poems are often said to have a “theme” or purpose. The theme may be some truth about love, death, friendship, sorrow, etc. For example, in a poem titled “Death Be Not Proud,” the 17th-century poet John Donne makes a statement about death and eternal life. He expresses his confidence that death is not as fearsome as people suppose it to be and that because of faith, a man's eternal soul will eventually have victory over death. The last words of the poem ironically point the reader to that belief —“Death, thou shalt die.”

In the poem “Ozymandias,” the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley makes a definite statement about art. The poem describes a crumbling statue of an ancient king whose pedestal of the statue makes this threatening statement: “Look on my works ye mighty and despair!” Ironically, the king has died long ago and his kingdom has long vanished. Even the artist's representation of the king is in a state of disrepair. Yet the expression of the king's arrogance remains completely intact on the statue's face. The theme of Shelley's poem is that though everything in the world is passing, beauty, which the true artist captures in his work, lives forever.

A poet's theme or purpose may does not have to be conclusive statements about deep topics such as life, death or art. Take Wordsworth's poems, for example. Wordsworth states in the preface to his most famous work, *Lyrical Ballads*, that like a photographer he tried to take a snapshot of the human mind when it is “excited,” or stirred up. One poem that clearly illustrates the general purpose of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* is “We Are Seven.” In the poem, a young girl is asked a question—how many children are in her family. She answers seven, but it becomes clear by what she says that only five of the siblings are still alive. The speaker of the poem then replies that if two of the seven have died, there are five, not seven. His logical assertion excites her mind to confusion because as a young child, she does not understand the idea of death. Though the speaker makes one last attempt at getting her to see that they are five, not seven, the little girl has her last say, when she replies—“Nay, we are seven!”

The snapshot of the girl's mind shows what Wordsworth states in the first stanza of the poem,

“A little child, dear brother Jim  
That lightly draws its breath,  
And feels its life in every limb,  
What should it know of death?”

While many poets believed that their poetry was an expression of some truth, whether it be about death, life, art, or the human mind, other poets like Edgar Allan Poe said that it was rather an expression of beauty. Poe defined poetry, in fact, as the “rhythmical creation of beauty.” He argued that the primary concern of poetry is not truth, as it appeals only to the logical mind, not our artistic sense (which he called *taste*). Furthermore, unlike beauty, ideas do not elevate our soul or excite our emotions—effects that he thought that every poem should have on its reader. He said further that poetry should not have any purpose, but that it should be written for its own sake. This idea is echoed in a poem titled “Ars Poetics,” written by the early 20th-century poet Archibald MacLeish. He said in the poem that “a poem must not mean but be.” Both Poe and MacLeish’s idea that a poem should not communicate any meaning, idea or purpose does not make logical sense. Like all literature, a poem is an author’s attempt to put into writing what he conceives in his head. The attempt is his purpose, and what he conceives in his head is his idea or meaning. For example, MacLeish said that a poem should not mean but be—is that not an idea itself and isn’t the purpose of his poem to communicate that idea?

Not every poem, however, communicates a deep theme that can be summarized neatly in a couple of sentences. Some poems create an impression, feeling or mood, as in Tennyson’s portrayal of an eagle in his short fragment, “The Eagle.”

The Eagle  
By Alfred Tennyson  
  
He clasps the crag with hooked hands;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ring’d with the azure world, he stands.  
  
The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

From Tennyson’s poem the reader gets a sense of the majesty of a bird of prey, as it sits in its aery, high, high up on the top of a mountain crag before it swoops down like a thunderbolt. The appeal of Edward Lear’s and Lewis Carroll’s poetry, too, is not steeped in deep themes. Instead, the main appeal is in its word play and language. Called nonsense poetry, Lear’s and Carroll’s poems are not to bring deep truths of life

to the reader, and critics who do not acknowledge that fact and try to find such significance in their poems are, as the expression goes, “barking up the wrong tree.” Below is a limerick written by the Victorian verse maker, Edward Lear. A limerick is a kind of humorous poem, or verse, in which the first, second and fifth lines consist of six stressed syllables and the third and fourth lines consist of two stressed syllables.

There was a Young Lady whose chin,  
Resembled the point of a pin:  
So she had it made sharp,  
And purchased a harp,  
And played several tunes with her chin.

Often the main attraction of a poem can be found in its technical use of language, meter and rhyme, such as in William Cowper’s “John Gilpin.” Again, there are no symbols in the poem suggestive of deep themes of death or love or sorrow. However, to say it has no serious theme does not mean it has no meaning or purpose. The appeal of the work is its humorous tone which the technical use of language, meter and rhyme helps bring out. This poem is an entertaining narrative of a man who is held captive by a horse that he is riding. Though the rider, John Gilpin, intends to ride to Edmonton to celebrate his wedding anniversary, the horse has a mind of its own and takes him on a dizzying ride through the streets of London, making onlookers assume that he is either running a race or escaping the law. His wife sees him speed past the inn at which they were supposed to eat their anniversary meal. Her exchange with him is quite funny:

At Edmonton his loving wife  
From the balcony spied  
Her tender husband, wondering much  
To see how he did ride.  
“Stop, stop, John Gilpin!—Here’s the house!”  
They all at once did cry;  
“The dinner waits, and we are tired;”  
Said Gilpin—“So am I!”

### **Exercise 1.1**

Be able to answer the following questions.

1. What is the “theme” of a poem?
2. Do you think that all poetry should have a theme or purpose?
3. What was Wordsworth’s general purpose in writing the poems for his book *Lyrical Ballads*?

4. Why is there such a difference in opinion among poets and critics as to what poetry is?
5. What do you think Aristotle means when he says that poetry is an imitation of nature?