



Language Arts



Earth Day: Every
Day for Everybody



Below is a poem by William Butler Yeats along with some discussion questions to get your students interested in doing close readings of literature. The poem was published in 1892.

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

W.B. Yeats

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.

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.

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.

Discussion questions:

1. This poem is influenced by Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, a book that describes the author's experiment in living alone in the woods. If you have read the book, draw some similarities between this poem and *Walden*. Consider the following quotation from WB Yeats' autobiography: "I had...the ambition, formed in Sligo in my teens, of living in imitation of Thoreau on Innisfree, a little island in Lough Gill (Ireland), and when walking through Fleet Street (London) very homesick I heard a little tinkle of water and saw a fountain in a shop-window which balanced a little ball upon its jet, and began to remember lake water. From the sudden remembrance came my poem 'Innisfree'..."
2. This poem is about escaping. From what does Yeats want to escape?



3. Why does Yeats repeat the phrase “I will arise and go now” in the third stanza? Do you think he is really going to build a cabin at Innisfree?
4. Describe the way Yeats views “nature” as opposed to “civilization”. What is desirable or undesirable about them?

