

# Language Arts



Earth Day: Every  
Day for Everybody

*Below is a poem by John Keats along with some discussion questions to get your students interested in doing close readings of literature. The poem was first published in 1820, one year before his death from Tuberculosis.*

## **To Autumn**

**John Keats**

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,--



While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows\*, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft  
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

\*shallows: willows

*Questions for further discussion*

1. Pay attention to the language of the first stanza. For Keats, is Autumn a season of plenty or of little? How does this language distinguish Autumn from Spring?
2. Consider the language of the second stanza. Is Autumn a season of energy and liveliness, or of somnolence? Give some examples.
3. Do you think the tone of the poem accurately reflects how you think of Autumn?
4. Why do you think John Keats would write a poem *to* Autumn rather than simply *about* Autumn?

