# **ODE TO AUTUMN**

John Keats

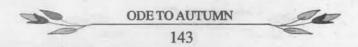
JOHN KEATS (1795-1821), one of the greatest of English Romantic poets, was born at Moonfields, London. He studied at Clark's School at Enfield.

Deeply interested in Cricket and boxing, he grew into a voracious reader especially of Greek mythology. He even started a translation of Virgil's Aeneid. His ambition to become a poet was fired by his first acquaintance with Spenser's Faerie Queene. His first poem 'Lines in Imitation of Spenser' was published in 1814. His first volume of poetry entitled Poems was published in 1817. His poem 'Endymion' was well appreciated by Wordsworth. It was published in 1818. His odes 'On Indolence', 'On a Grecian Urn', 'To Psyche', 'To a Nightingale', 'On Melancholy' and 'Ode to Autumn' made him a great romantic poet



of English literature. So did 'Lamia' and 'Hyperion'. He died of tuberculosis in 1821 at the age of 26, but within this short span of life he was able to achieve greatness. His poems and letters have depth beneath their beauty and reflect his awareness of the pains and sufferings of life. To him, 'A Thing of beauty is a joy for ever,' and "Beauty is truth, truth beauty.' In the poem 'Ode To Autumn' Keats describes the beauty and characteristic spirit of autumn in a series of memorable pictures, exhibiting the principle of beauty in nature.

- A. Work in small groups and discuss these questions:
- 1. How do you feel in different seasons? Which is the most enjoyable one?
- 2. New leaves and fruits grow on trees in a particular season. Which is that?
- 3. Have you seen a tree bent and loaded with fruits? What feeling does this sight evoke in you?



# **ODE TO AUTUMN**

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-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripness 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.

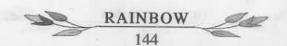
Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind; 15
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep

And sometimes like a **gleaner** thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-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 sallows, 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.

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# B.1. 1. Complete the following sentences on the basis of the poem:

- a) ...... is the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.
- b) .....fill all fruits with ripeness.
- c) ..... sits carelessly on a granary floor.
- d) The 'winnowing wind' softly lifts the hair of ......
- e) ..... twitter in the sky.

# B.1. 2. Answer the following questions briefly:

- 1) Who are depicted as friends in the first two lines?
- 2) What happens in autumn?
- 3) In what sense does the Sun conspire with autumn?
- 4) How do the sun and summer help in ripeness of fruits in autumn?
- 5) How are autumn and summer related to spring?

#### **GLOSSARY AND NOTES**

mellow (adj): soft and sweet in taste

fruitfulness (n): abundance conspiring (v): scheming

vines (n): climbing plants whose fruit is the grape

plump (v): make fleshy or fat

hazel (n): small trees that produce small nuts

kernel (n): seed, core

o'er brimm'd (v): filled so much that some spills over

granary (n): store-house for grain

winnowing(pp): blowing a current of air to remove its outer covering

swath(n): a long strip of land on which crops have been cut

gleaner(n): one who collects or gathers

choir(n): chorus

gnats(n): a small fly with two wings that bite
sallows (adj): of an unhealthy yellow colour

bourn (n): domain, land

hedge -cricket (n): brown green pink insect which makes shrill noise in the bush

redbreast (n): a bird called robin ripeness(n): ready to be gathered

# ODETO AUTUMN



#### C. 1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

- 1. What is the central idea of the poem?
- 2. What does Keats mean by the following:

'T was here we loved in Summer day and greener.'

- Does the poet convey his love to Nature through such lines as given above? If yes, give examples
- Pick out the images related to different aspects of Nature. Write a note on the use of images in the poem.
- 5. What do autumn and spring symbolise in the poem? Explain.
- 6. Do you like this poem? Give two reasons.
- 7. What does the poet say about the music of autumn? Do you like this music?

#### C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in groups or pairs:

- 1. No season, in itself, is either pleasant or unpleasant.
- 2. Perception of life changes with maturity

#### C. 3. COMPOSITION

Write a paragraph in about 100 words on the following:

- a) Autumn
- b) Relation between seasons and human life.

#### D. WORD STUDY

## D.1. Dictionary Use

**Ex.1.** Look up a dictionary and write two meanings of the following words – the one in which it is used in the lesson and the other which is more common

fruitfulness bosom maturing conspiring steady plains sinking swallows

#### D.2. Word-formation

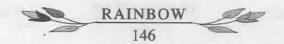
Read the following line carefully:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness

In the above line, 'fruitfulness' is derived from fruit. When '-ful' is added to fruit, it becomes fruitful. Again, when '-ness' is added to fruitful, it becomes fruitfulness.

Make words by adding '-ful- or '-ness' to the following words;

happy beauty kind bounty joy duty



### D.3. Word-meaning

# Ex. 1. Match the words in Column A with their meaning in Column B:

Column A	Column B
mist	storage for grains
kernel	emission
granary	colour
laden	core
oozing	loaded
hue	fog ·

#### E. GRAMMAR

### Ex. 1. Read the following sentences carefully:

'Where are the songs of Spring?

'Where', in the above sentence is an interrogative substitute of an adverb. Find out such interrogative substitutes of adverbs in the poem.

#### F. ACTIVITIES

Ex.1. The last word of the first line of the poem 'fruitfulness' rhymes with the third line 'bless'. Point out which words rhyme with 'run', 'shells', 'core' and 'bees'.

Ex.2. Is there anything special about these sounds? Do they bind the poem?

Ex.3. Do different words bind the meaning of the poem?

