Name _____ Class _____ Date _____



She Walks in Beauty

by Lord Byron

Grades 8–10 · Common Core RL.8.4, RL.8.2, RL.8.5

Byron wrote "She Walks in Beauty" in 1814 and published it in Hebrew Melodies (1815), a book of lyrics set to music. Tradition says he was inspired by seeing his cousin by marriage, Anne Wilmot, at a party, dressed in mourning black with spangles. The poem has three six-line stanzas in iambic tetrameter rhyming ababab. Watch how it moves from outer beauty to inner goodness.

THE POEM

She walks in Beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

VOCABULARY

climes — regions; skies or climates

aspect — face; appearance

mellowed — softened, made gentle

gaudy — too bright; showy

impaired — damaged, weakened

tress — a lock of hair

serenely — calmly, peacefully

eloquent — expressive; able to speak strongly

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The first line compares the woman to "the night". Why is this surprising, and what kind of night does Byron mean?

2. Find two pairs of opposites in stanzas 1 and 2. What do they suggest about her beauty?

3. What does "One shade the more, one ray the less" mean?

4. In stanza 3, what do her "smiles" and "tints" reveal about her character?

5. Is this poem mainly about physical beauty or inner goodness? Use the final two lines in your answer.

WRITING PROMPT

Describe someone you admire in a short poem or paragraph that moves, like Byron's, from how the person looks to what kind of person they are. Use at least one pair of opposites.

She Walks in Beauty — Answer Key

1. Love poems usually compare women to daylight or the sun. Byron's night is not gloomy but "Of cloudless climes and starry skies": dark yet full of light.
2. "dark and bright"; "shade" and "ray"; "Heaven" and "gaudy day". Her beauty is a perfect balance, softer and finer than plain brightness ("tender light").
3. Her beauty is so exactly balanced that one bit more darkness or one bit less light would have "half impaired the nameless grace."
4. They "tell of days in goodness spent": her face shows a peaceful mind and "A heart whose love is innocent!"
5. Both, but it ends on inner goodness: "A mind at peace with all below, / A heart whose love is innocent!" Outer beauty is shown as the sign of inner virtue. Accept supported answers.

Read the full poem online: poetrycatalog.com/she-walks-in-beauty-lord-byron/