

analysis of sonnet by billy collins

An Analysis of Sonnets by Billy Collins: Deconstructing the Familiar

Introduction:

Billy Collins, the former United States Poet Laureate, is celebrated for his accessible, witty, and often self-deprecating approach to poetry. While he's known for his free verse, Collins also penned a substantial number of sonnets, a form traditionally associated with strict structure and high formality. This post offers a deep dive into an analysis of several of Collins' sonnets, exploring how he subverts and revitalizes this classical form, using his characteristic humor and insightful observations of everyday life. We'll examine his use of language, imagery, and structure to unravel the unique poetic voice present in his sonnet collection. Prepare to discover a fresh perspective on a seemingly familiar poetic form.

1. Collins' Subversion of Sonnet Form:

The sonnet, traditionally a fourteen-line poem adhering to a specific rhyme scheme (either Shakespearean or Petrarchan), presents a rigid structure. Collins, however, doesn't shy away from bending these rules. While some of his sonnets adhere more closely to traditional forms, many display a playful looseness. He might alter the rhyme scheme, deviate from the iambic pentameter, or even employ enjambment to disrupt the expected flow. This deliberate departure isn't a sign of carelessness; rather, it reflects his desire to create a more conversational, approachable style, contrasting starkly with the often-formal tone associated with traditional sonnets. This subversion allows him to inject a sense of spontaneity and immediacy into the poem, drawing the reader into a more intimate connection with the speaker's thoughts.

1. Thematic Exploration in Collins' Sonnets:

Collins' sonnets frequently explore the mundane aspects of daily life, transforming ordinary experiences into moments of poetic reflection. He elevates the everyday – a walk in the park, a conversation with a stranger, a memory from childhood – to a level of profound significance. Themes of memory, mortality, the passage of time, and the nature of art itself frequently emerge, often intertwined with a gentle self-awareness and a touch of wry humor. This subtle blend of the profound and the commonplace is what makes Collins' work so captivating. He doesn't shy away from the awkward or the trivial, recognizing their inherent poetic potential.

1. Language and Imagery: The Power of the Familiar:

Collins' mastery lies in his ability to use simple, everyday language to create evocative imagery. He avoids overly ornate or obscure vocabulary, preferring instead clear, concise diction that resonates with the reader on a visceral level. His imagery is often drawn from the everyday world – familiar objects, scenes, and experiences – but he presents them with a fresh perspective, highlighting their often-overlooked beauty or strangeness. The reader is invited to see the world anew through the lens of his poetic vision. He subtly imbues his descriptions with a sense of whimsy and gentle irony, further enhancing the accessibility and appeal of his work.

1. Tone and Voice: Self-deprecation and Wit:

A defining characteristic of Collins' poetry is his self-deprecating humor and conversational tone. His sonnets often feature a speaker who is both observant and self-aware, acknowledging the limitations of language and the complexities of human experience. This relatable voice creates a sense of intimacy between the poet and the reader. The wit isn't sarcastic or cynical; instead, it's a gentle, often playful approach that makes the reader feel comfortable and engaged. This self-deprecation prevents the poems from becoming overly sentimental or pretentious, enhancing their honesty and emotional impact.

1. Structure and Form: Variations on a Theme:

While some of Collins' sonnets conform to traditional structures, others depart significantly. He might use variations in rhyme scheme, line length, or meter to achieve specific effects. Sometimes, the structure reflects the content of the poem – a chaotic or fragmented experience might be mirrored in a disrupted formal structure. Other times, the structural variation enhances the poem's ironic or playful tone. Analyzing the form of Collins' sonnets is crucial to fully understanding his creative intent and the subtle nuances of his poetic technique. A careful reading of the structure can reveal unexpected layers of meaning.

Detailed Outline:

Title: A Deep Dive into the Sonnets of Billy Collins

I. Introduction: A brief overview of Billy Collins' work and his approach to the sonnet form. Highlight the unique aspects of his style.

II. Subverting Tradition: Analysis of how Collins deviates from traditional sonnet structures and the impact of these deviations on the poem's meaning and tone. Examples of specific sonnets.

III. Thematic Explorations: Examination of recurring themes in Collins' sonnets – memory, mortality, everyday life, art. Discussion of how he elevates the mundane. Examples of specific sonnets.

IV. Language and Imagery: Analysis of Collins' diction, imagery, and use of figurative language. How his simple language creates powerful and evocative images. Examples from his work.

V. Tone and Voice: Discussion of Collins' self-deprecating humor, conversational tone, and the

creation of a relatable speaker. The effect of this voice on the reader.

VI. Form and Structure: Detailed analysis of the structural variations in Collins' sonnets and how these variations contribute to the overall meaning and effect. Examples of specific structural choices.

VII. Conclusion: Summary of key findings and a reflection on the lasting impact of Collins' unique approach to the sonnet.

(The following sections expand upon the points in the detailed outline above, providing in-depth analysis and examples. Due to space constraints, detailed analysis of specific sonnets will be omitted here. However, replacing these placeholders with actual textual examples from Collins' sonnets is crucial for a complete article.)

(II. Subverting Tradition): This section would include detailed examples from Collins' sonnets, showing how he alters rhyme schemes, deviates from iambic pentameter, and uses enjambment to create a conversational and less formal tone. Specific sonnets would be analyzed to illustrate these techniques.

(III. Thematic Explorations): This section would delve deeper into the major themes, providing textual evidence from Collins' sonnets to support the analysis. Specific poems would be examined to show how these themes are explored through imagery, language, and structure.

(IV. Language and Imagery): This section would provide close readings of selected lines and stanzas, demonstrating how Collins uses simple yet effective language to create vivid imagery and emotional resonance.

(V. Tone and Voice): This section would discuss how Collins' self-deprecating humor and conversational style create a strong connection with the reader. Examples of specific lines or stanzas that exhibit this unique voice would be provided.

(VI. Form and Structure): This section would involve in-depth analysis of the formal aspects of several sonnets, demonstrating how Collins uses structural elements to enhance the meaning and effect of his poems. Examples of structural choices and their impact would be given.

(VII. Conclusion): This section would offer a concise summary of the key points discussed and an assessment of the significance of Collins' innovative approach to the sonnet.

FAQs:

1. What makes Billy Collins' sonnets unique?
2. How does Collins subvert traditional sonnet structures?

3. What are the common themes explored in Collins' sonnets?
4. How does Collins use language and imagery in his sonnets?
5. What is the tone and voice in Collins' sonnets?
6. How do structural variations contribute to the meaning of Collins' sonnets?
7. What are some of the best examples of Collins' sonnets?
8. How does Collins' work compare to other contemporary sonneteers?
9. Where can I find more information on Billy Collins' poetry?

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6. Billy Collins' Sonnets and the Theme of Mortality: Explores the poet's treatment of mortality and its reflection in his work.
7. The Poetic Techniques of Billy Collins: Examines his use of language, imagery, and structure in detail.
8. Billy Collins' Use of Form and Structure: A deep dive into the formal aspects of his poems, including the variations in sonnet structures.
9. An Introduction to the Poetry of Billy Collins: A comprehensive overview of his poetic career and his contribution to American literature.

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin

Terrance Hayes, 2018-06-19 Finalist for the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award in Poetry One of the New York Times Critics' Top Books of 2018 A powerful, timely, dazzling collection of sonnets from one of America's most acclaimed poets, Terrance Hayes, the National Book Award-winning author of *Lighthouse Sonnets* that reckon with Donald Trump's America. -The New York Times In seventy poems bearing the same title, Terrance Hayes explores the meanings of American, of assassin, and of love in the sonnet form. Written during the first two hundred days of the Trump presidency, these poems are haunted by the country's past and future eras and errors, its dreams and nightmares. Inventive, compassionate, hilarious, melancholy, and bewildered--the wonders of this new collection are irreducible and stunning.

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analysis of sonnet by billy collins: The Art of Drowning Billy Collins, 1995 This collection of poems has a subject matter ranging from the gustatory pleasures of osso buco to an analysis of the handwriting of Keats; from the art form of the calendar pinup to blues music.

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: The Apple That Astonished Paris Billy Collins, 2014-02-01 Bruce Weber in the New York Times called Billy Collins "the most popular poet in America." He is the author of many books of poetry, including, most recently, *The Rain in Portugal: Poems*. In 1988 the University of Arkansas Press published Billy Collins's *The Apple That Astonished Paris*, his "first real book of poems," as he describes it in a new, delightful preface written expressly for this new printing to help celebrate both the Press's twenty-fifth anniversary and this book, one of the Press's all-time best sellers. In his usual witty and dry style, Collins writes, "I gathered together what I considered my best poems and threw them in the mail." After "what seemed like a very long time" Press director Miller Williams, a poet as well, returned the poems to him in the "familiar self-addressed, stamped envelope." He told Collins that there was good work here but that there was work to be done before he'd have a real collection he and the Press could be proud of: "Williams's words were more encouragement than I had ever gotten before and more than enough to inspire me to begin taking my writing more seriously than I had before." This collection includes some of Collins's most anthologized poems, including "Introduction to Poetry," "Another Reason Why I Don't Keep a Gun in the House," and "Advice to Writers." Its success over the years is testament to Collins's talent as one of our best poets, and as he writes in the preface, "this new edition . . . is a credit to the sustained vibrancy of the University of Arkansas Press and, I suspect, to the abiding spirit of its former director, my first editorial father."

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: Aimless Love Billy Collins, 2014-10-21 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER "America's favorite poet."—The Wall Street Journal From the two-term Poet Laureate of the United States Billy Collins comes his first volume of new and selected poems in twelve years. *Aimless Love* combines fifty new poems with generous selections from his four most recent books—*Nine Horses*, *The Trouble with Poetry*, *Ballistics*, and *Horoscopes for the Dead*. Collins's unmistakable voice, which brings together plain speech with imaginative surprise, is clearly heard on every page, reminding us how he has managed to enrich the tapestry of contemporary poetry and greatly expand its audience. His work is featured in top literary magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, and *The Atlantic*, and he sells out reading venues all across the country. Appearing regularly in *The Best American Poetry* series, his poems appeal to readers and live audiences far and wide and

have been translated into more than a dozen languages. By turns playful, ironic, and serious, Collins's poetry captures the nuances of everyday life while leading the reader into zones of inspired wonder. In the poet's own words, he hopes that his poems "begin in Kansas and end in Oz." Touching on the themes of love, loss, joy, and poetry itself, these poems showcase the best work of this "poet of plenitude, irony, and Augustan grace" (The New Yorker). Envoy Go, little book, out of this house and into the world, carriage made of paper rolling toward town bearing a single passenger beyond the reach of this jittery pen and far from the desk and the nosy gooseneck lamp. It is time to decamp, put on a jacket and venture outside, time to be regarded by other eyes, bound to be held in foreign hands. So off you go, infants of the brain, with a wave and some bits of fatherly advice: stay out as late as you like, don't bother to call or write, and talk to as many strangers as you can. Praise for Aimless Love "[Billy Collins] is able, with precious few words, to make me cry. Or laugh out loud. He is a remarkable artist. To have such power in such an abbreviated form is deeply inspiring."—J. J. Abrams, The New York Times Book Review "His work is poignant, straightforward, usually funny and imaginative, also nuanced and surprising. It bears repeated reading and reading aloud."—The Plain Dealer "Collins has earned almost rock-star status. . . . He knows how to write layered, subtly witty poems that anyone can understand and appreciate—even those who don't normally like poetry. . . . The Collins in these pages is distinctive, evocative, and knows how to make the genre fresh and relevant."—The Christian Science Monitor "Collins's new poems contain everything you've come to expect from a Billy Collins poem. They stand solidly on even ground, chiseled and unbreakable. Their phrasing is elegant, the humor is alive, and the speaker continues to stroll at his own pace through the plainness of American life."—The Daily Beast "[Collins's] poetry presents simple observations, which create a shared experience between Collins and his readers, while further revealing how he takes life's everyday humdrum experiences and makes them vibrant."—The Times Leader

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: Nine Horses Billy Collins, 2011-08-10 Nine Horses, Billy Collins's first book of new poems since Picnic, Lightning in 1998, is the latest curve in the phenomenal trajectory of this poet's career. Already in his forties when he debuted with a full-length book, The Apple That Astonished Paris, Collins has become the first poet since Robert Frost to combine high critical acclaim with broad popular appeal. And, as if to crown this success, he was appointed Poet Laureate of the United States for 2001-2002, and reappointed for 2002-2003. What accounts for this remarkable achievement is the poems themselves, quiet meditations grounded in everyday life that ascend effortlessly into eye-opening imaginative realms. These new poems, in which Collins continues his delicate negotiations between the clear and the mysterious, the comic and the elegiac, are sure to sustain and increase his audience of avid readers.

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: The Trouble with Poetry and Other Poems Billy Collins, 2012-07-12 The Trouble with Poetry is the new collection from probably the most popular poet in the entire planet, and finds everyone's favourite contemporary Pre-Socratic in as funny and wise (and sometimes joyfully silly) form as ever. Billy Collins's tone is inimitable. Drawled and knowing, yet without a hint of world-weariness or cynicism, he fearlessly addresses the reader as friend and intimate -- and comrade, inviting them to square up to the various collective crises of the bald ape in the 21st century. Collins remains the only poet who can write about the next-to-nothing of our lives, the little boredoms, habits and frustrations of our daily and domestic existence, revealing their true importance and meaning -- and demonstrating that the same historical and cosmic forces bear upon them as upon the great events of the age. 'Billy Collins is one of my favourite poets in the world' Carol Ann Duffy 'I'd follow this man's mind anywhere' Michael Donaghy 'Billy Collins's poems describe all the worlds that are and were and some others besides' John Updike

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: Picnic, Lightning Billy Collins, 1998-01-15 Winner of the 1999 Paterson Poetry Prize Over the past decade, Billy Collins has emerged as the most beloved American poet since Robert Frost, garnering critical acclaim and broad popular appeal. Annie Proulx admits, I have never before felt possessive about a poet, but I am fiercely glad that Billy Collins is ours. John Updike proclaims his poems consistently startling, more serious than they seem, they

describe all the worlds that are and were and some others besides. This special, limited edition celebrates Billy Collins's years as U.S. Poet Laureate. *Picnic, Lightning*—one of the books that helped establish and secure his reputation and popularity during the 1990s—combines humor and seriousness, wit and sublimity. His poems touch on a wide range of subjects, from jazz to death, from weather to sex, but share common ground where the mind and heart can meet. Whether reading him for the first time or the fiftieth, this collector's edition is a must-have for anyone interested in the poet the New York Times calls simply the real thing.

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: Collins' Poems Jacob Guy Collins, 1883

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: The Dash Linda Ellis, 2012-04-16 When your life is over, everything you did will be represented by a single dash between two dates—what will that dash mean for the people you have known and loved? As Joseph Epstein once said, “We do not choose to be born. We do not choose our parents, or the country of our birth. We do not, most of us, choose to die. . . . But within this realm of choicelessness, we do choose how we live.” And that is what *The Dash* is all about. Beginning with an inspiring poem by Linda Ellis titled “*The Dash*,” renowned author Mac Anderson then applies his own signature commentary on how the poem motivates us to make certain choices in our lives—choices to ignore the calls of selfishness and instead reach out to others, using our God-given abilities to brighten their days and lighten their loads. After all, at the end of life, how we will be remembered—whether our dash represents a full, joyous life of seeking God’s glory, or merely the space between birth and death—will be entirely up to the people we’ve left behind, the lives we’ve changed.

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analysis of sonnet by billy collins: American Sonnets Wanda Coleman, 1994

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: Taking Off Emily Dickinson's Clothes Billy Collins, 2000-07-01 A funny and moving collection from one of America's bestselling poets Billy Collins is one of America's best loved poets and comes armed with plaudits from John Updike, E Annie Proulx. He is one of Carol Ann Duffy's favourite living poets and this *Selected* is the first time he will be published in the UK. From a poem about the relentless barking of next door's dog - *Another Reason Why I don't Keep a Gun in the House* - to an elegy to *The Best Cigarette*. Just read one poem and you'll be a committed fan. Billy Collins gets right to the heart of things. He is one of the funniest poets writing today. Billy Collins is a fantastic performer (his readings at the Poetry festival in Aldeburgh were sold out, as were all his US collections) and will hopefully be brought over by the South Bank, London in the Autumn. His readings are unmissable.

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: Ask Me William Stafford, 2014-01-07 In our time there has been no poet who revived human hearts and spirits more convincingly than William Stafford. —Naomi Shihab Nye Some time when the river is ice ask me mistakes I have made. Ask me whether what I have done is my life. —from *Ask Me* In celebration of the poet's centennial, *Ask Me* collects one hundred of William Stafford's essential poems. As a conscientious objector during World War II, while assigned to Civilian Public Service camps Stafford began his daily writing practice, a lifelong early-morning ritual of witness. His poetry reveals the consequences of violence, the daily necessity of moral decisions, and the bounty of art. *Selected* and with a note by Kim Stafford, *Ask Me* presents the best from a profound and original American voice.

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: The Rain in Portugal Billy Collins, 2016-10-04 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • From former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins comes a twelfth collection of poetry offering over fifty new poems that showcase the generosity, wit, and imaginative

play that prompted The Wall Street Journal to call him “America’s favorite poet.” The Rain in Portugal—a title that admits he’s not much of a rhymer—sheds Collins’s ironic light on such subjects as travel and art, cats and dogs, loneliness and love, beauty and death. His tones range from the whimsical—“the dogs of Minneapolis . . . / have no idea they’re in Minneapolis”—to the elegiac in a reaction to the death of Seamus Heaney. A student of the everyday, Collins here contemplates a weather vane, a still life painting, the calendar, and a child lost at a beach. His imaginative fabrications have Shakespeare flying comfortably in first class and Keith Richards supporting the globe on his head. By turns entertaining, engaging, and enlightening, The Rain in Portugal amounts to another chorus of poems from one of the most respected and familiar voices in the world of American poetry. Praise for The Rain in Portugal “Nothing in Billy Collins’s twelfth book . . . is exactly what readers might expect, and that’s the charm of this collection.”—The Washington Post “This new collection shows [Collins] at his finest. . . . Certain to please his large readership and a good place for readers new to Collins to begin.”—Library Journal “Disarmingly playful and wistfully candid.”—Booklist

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: Hope Is the Thing with Feathers Emily Dickinson, 2019-02-12 Part of a new collection of literary voices from Gibbs Smith, written by, and for, extraordinary women—to encourage, challenge, and inspire. One of American’s most distinctive poets, Emily Dickinson scorned the conventions of her day in her approach to writing, religion, and society. Hope Is the Thing with Feathers is a collection from her vast archive of poetry to inspire the writers, creatives, and leaders of today. Continue your journey in the Women’s Voices series with Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Bronte and The Feminist Papers by Mary Wollstonecraft.

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analysis of sonnet by billy collins: And Still I Rise Maya Angelou, 2011-08-17 Maya Angelou’s unforgettable collection of poetry lends its name to the documentary film about her life, And Still I Rise, as seen on PBS’s American Masters. Pretty women wonder where my secret lies. I’m not cute or built to suit a fashion model’s size But when I start to tell them, They think I’m telling lies. I say, It’s in the reach of my arms, The span of my hips, The stride of my step, The curl of my lips. I’m a woman Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman, That’s me. Thus begins “Phenomenal Woman,” just one of the beloved poems collected here in Maya Angelou’s third book of verse. These poems are powerful, distinctive, and fresh—and, as always, full of the lifting rhythms of love and remembering. And Still I Rise is written from the heart, a celebration of life as only Maya Angelou has discovered it. “It is true poetry she is writing,” M.F.K. Fisher has observed, “not just rhythm, the beat, rhymes. I find it very moving and at times beautiful. It has an innate purity about it, unquenchable dignity. . . . It is astounding, flabbergasting, to recognize it, in all the words I read every day and night . . . it gives me heart, to hear so clearly the caged bird singing and to understand her notes.”

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: Ballistics Billy Collins, 2011-08-10 In this moving and playful collection, Billy Collins touches on an array of subjects—love, death, solitude, youth, and aging—delving deeper than ever before into the intricate folds of life.

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: Death of a Naturalist Seamus Heaney, 2014-02-04 Death of a Naturalist (1966) marked the auspicious debut of Seamus Heaney, a universally acclaimed master of modern literature. As a first book of poems, it is remarkable for its accurate perceptions and rich linguistic gifts.

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analysis of sonnet by billy collins: Poetry Unbound: 50 Poems to Open Your World Pádraig Ó. Tuama, 2022-12-06 “Mesmerizing, magical, deeply moving.” —Elif Shafak Expanding on the popular podcast of the same name from On Being Studios, Poetry Unbound offers immersive reflections on fifty powerful poems. In the tumult of our contemporary moment, poetry has emerged as an inviting, consoling outlet with a unique power to move and connect us, to inspire fury, tears, joy, laughter, and surprise. This generous anthology pairs fifty illuminating poems with poet and podcast host Pádraig Ó Tuama’s appealing, unhurried reflections. With keen insight and warm personal anecdotes, Ó Tuama considers each poem’s artistry and explores how its meaning can reach into our own lives. Focusing mainly on poets writing today, Ó Tuama engages with a diverse array of voices that includes Ada Limón, Ilya Kaminsky, Margaret Atwood, Ocean Vuong, Layli Long Soldier, and Reginald Dwayne Betts. Natasha Trethewey meditates on miscegenation and Mississippi; Raymond Antrobus makes poetry out of the questions shot at him by an immigration officer; Martín Espada mourns his father; Marie Howe remembers and blesses her mother’s body; Aimee Nezhukumatathil offers comfort to her child-self. Through these wide-ranging poems, Ó Tuama guides us on an inspiring journey to reckon with self-acceptance, history, independence, parenthood, identity, joy, and resilience. For anyone who has wanted to try their hand at a conversation with poetry but doesn’t know where to start, Poetry Unbound presents a window through which to celebrate the art of being alive.

analysis of sonnet by billy collins: Poetry at Work Glynn Young, Scott Edward Anderson, 2013-11 There is value in taking poetry to work, and finding the poetry that's already there. Publications like Harvard Business Review and FastCompany are starting to write about the power of poetry-noting poetry's effectiveness in building creative thinkers and problem solvers. Yet there is no single source to guide those who are *at work* every day, with little direction for how to explore the power of poetry in the workplace. Glynn Young's Poetry at Work is that guide. From discussions about how poetry is built into the very fabric of work, to practical suggestions on how to be a poet at work, this is a book that meets a very real need. Altogether-a landmark book that moves beyond David Whyte's seminal book on poetry and the corporate world. More than just philosophy, this book brings the hope of practice and surprising discovery, the benefits of stress relief and increased accomplishment. *** The Masters in Fine Living Series is designed to help people live a whole life through the power of reading, writing, and just plain living. Look for titles with the tabs read, write, live, play, learn, or grow-and join a culture of individuals interested in living deeply, richly.

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friendships, and these conversations, will come the works of art and poetry that will define New York City as the capital of world culture--abstract expressionism and the New York School of Poetry. A richly detailed portrait of one of the great movements in American arts and letters, *The Last Avant-Garde* covers the years 1948-1966 and focuses on four fast friends--the poets Frank O'Hara, James Schuyler, John Ashbery, and Kenneth Koch. Lehman brings to vivid life the extraordinary creative ferment of the time and place, the relationship of great friendship to art, and the powerful influence that a group of visual artists--especially Jane Freilicher, Larry Rivers, and Fairfield Porter--had on the literary efforts of the New York School. *The Last Avant-Garde* is both a definitive and lively view of a quintessentially American aesthetic and an exploration of the dynamics of creativity.

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analysis of sonnet by billy collins: *Songs of Innocence* William Blake, 1789

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