

CIRCUS ANIMAL'S DESERTION

W B YEATS

DETAILED SUMMARY

- ▶ Tells about his past poetic career and his struggle for inspiration to write in present.
- ▶ And searching for truth that remain when all vanities and illusions of life washed away by decay of age and corruption of time.
- ▶ Can be considered as an autobiographical poem. (coz he is talking about his old age)

Stanza I

- ▶ Begins by describing searching in vain for a poetic theme or something to write abt.
- ▶ In a word, desperately searching for an idea, inspiration or central meaning that will allow him to understand all that has happened to him in his life.
- ▶ pretty serious case of writer's block. Our speaker is trying to find something – anything – that he can still write about.
- ▶ But no idea came into his mind that satisfy the speaker's longing to write good poetry.
- ▶ “I sought” appears twice, which helps hammer in the point that this quest has not necessarily been an easy one for our speaker.
- ▶ He is trying to find out an idea since six weeks.
- ▶ Six weeks is an awful long time to go without inspiration.
- ▶ He did everything which can inspire himself.
- ▶ Broken man-suggests man at the end of his career. Or old age.
- ▶ After all this, he decided to turn inward. He must be satisfied with his own heart and his own emotions.

- After all of the searching for outlandish themes in all kinds of places (for six weeks, no less), it turns out his own feelings and experiences might just be the best place to start.
- Although previously it is not needed to find inspiration to write poetry.
- His poems were composed easily without any barriers.
- The problem is, once upon a time, our speaker didn't have to fall back on the matters of the heart for poetic fodder. He was a regular circus master, professionally marching all of his "animals" (or, his poems) out on display. It was like he was like a circus master in control of all of his animals and the animals are the poem.(metaphor)
- a metaphor for the types of poetry Yeats used to create – poems full of lions and women and, well, "Lord knows what."
- And through the writing and publication the speaker put them on as the word on show.
- 5th line suggests the speaker's whole life.
- He'll have to be satisfied writing from his heart.
- In the last two lines the speaker gives an eg. of the diversity of the past subject matter.
- There have been so many different characters he has written about over the years that he can't even remember them. He remember how enchanted he was by the mythological characters.

Stanza II

- ▶ Speaker still worry about his present inability to write. So if all of your new thoughts don't seem to be panning out, you can always go for a stroll down memory lane.
- ▶ He is looking into his old works, introduces them and gives his personal view about these works.
- ▶ Enumerate means count.
- ▶ He began to think that he is going to count everything he has written to see where he should go next.
- ▶ Old themes- suggest everything he has written previously.
- ▶ Allusions-Allusion is a figure of speech, in which an object or circumstance from unrelated context is referred to covertly or indirectly.
- ▶ The theme of past is introduced here by sea rider Oisín.
- ▶ Yeats spent a good deal of his youth writing about Irish folk heroes and Celtic myth. His poems and even his letters express a yearning for the sweeping emotions of myth – the supernatural love and unbelievable bravery that were the stuff of legend.
- ▶ This figure comes from Irish folk legend which was of great imp to Yeats.
- ▶ This character appears in 'The Wanderings of Oisín' pub in 1889.
- ▶ He is regarded in Irish mythology as a warrior and the greatest poet of Ireland.
- ▶ This Oisín theme (the first theme that he enumerates) is all about Irish heritage and identity, which is something about which Yeats wrote a ton throughout his poetic career. In fact, he wrote a poem all about Oisín in 1889, called "The Wanderings of Oisín." That poem, it's no surprise, is full of "enchanted islands" and "allegorical dreams."
- ▶ Oisín is spoken of by the poet as having lived a life filled with allegorical dreams around enchanted islands.
- ▶ He has called inspiration from traditional poetic works to inspire his own.
- ▶ The speaker who becomes more and more likely to be the poet himself describes this work and others he has written as, containing themes of the embittered heart.(angry or resentful at having been treated unfairly.)
- ▶ These are emotions which might have adorned old songs or Courtly shows. Something about this Oisín theme makes it fitting for "old songs or courtly shows."

- Oisín was lured onto a magical island(The land of youth) by an enchanting fairy- Niamh(He thinks he stays there for three years, but when he gets back to Ireland, he realizes he's actually been gone for 300 years.
- In the concluding couplet he speaks of his own desire for the bosom of his fairy bride.
- It seems as if contrary to what the Speaker said before.
- His own emotions have been getting into his poems all along.
- He has a longing for a relationship like that which Oisín was involved in.
- Yeats elaborates on earlier periods of his literary career.

- counter-truth: So while his early poems were all about Oisín and enchanted adventures, these plays were about something a bit different.
- This part revolves around a play titled the 'Countess Cathleen' pub in 1892 by W B Yeats.
- Yeats dedicated this play to Maud Gonne,(an actress, feminist, and Irish nationalist) who also acted in it. His love for her and for her political activism became the dream.
- Like the Cathleen in the play, who sells her soul to the devil to save some needy folks, Gonne became so caught up in the whirling emotions of a grand cause – in this case, the Irish freedom fights – that she lost her sense of right and wrong.

- Yeats wrote in the final line it was the dream rather than reality that occupied his mind and heart.
 - In the story, Cathleen gave her soul away, she sold it to the devil in order to save the needy.
 - Rather than it fall into the hands of the Devil, heaven had inverted and saved it.
 - The speaker became so infatuated with these character, he fell in love with a character he created or the idea of what a woman could be.
 - He had to separate himself from the dream in order to return to life.
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- ▶ This part contains another allusion to a myth Yeats wrote in the past.
 - ▶ It refers to the fool and blind man. This character also appears within Irish folklore in ‘The legend of Cucuhlain.
 - ▶ He was a famed warrior from a young age who might have been a reincarnation of his father, a God.(it is said that his father was no mortal man, but the great god Lugh of the Long Hand.)
 - ▶ Cuchulain is said to have fought the uncontrollable sea.
 - ▶ The poet knows the mysteries contained in his writing while the legend was important to the speaker, this person and the world they lived where enchanting him.
 - ▶ Yeats refers to his play on ‘Bailey's Strand’ pub in 1905.
 - ▶ In the final lines the speaker is realizing how easy it is to become trapped in one's own stories.
 - ▶ He felt the desire to escape and lose all connection to the present.
 - ▶ Yeats here come to the realization that figurative language, images, wordplay and all of the trappings of poetry and literature are what he has loved and created.

Stanza III

- ▶ The speaker says that those images were powerful coz they were complete.
- ▶ He says that they grew in pure mind and asks of what they began.
- ▶ The speaker contemplates what it was that inspired him to write about these characters.
- ▶ He also asks himself :where did they come from and how.
- ▶ The speaker repeats the word old 6 times.
- ▶ This technique is known as anaphora.(Anaphora is a rhetorical device that features repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences, phrases, or clauses.)
- ▶ The myths he is referencing are old but now the speaker is also seeing his way of working as old. It is time for him to move past the yew step stories of his previous poems.
- ▶ The last line suggests a place where old things congregate and were his heart can be found.
- ▶ The speakers plan is to dig his way down into the depths of his own heart.
- ▶ He will begin writing again as if he had never done it before.
- ▶ The end of the poem finds the speaker emerging out of his memories to observe the present moment which is desolate.
- ▶ Yeats reveals himself in the months before his death to be deeply concerned with the consecrate reality of life.
- ▶ As he nears death he understands all of the masterful images have their origins in the ugly real world.