

## W. Blake: *The Lamb & The Tyger*

"The Lamb"  
from *Songs of Innocence*

Little Lamb who made thee  
Dost thou know who made thee  
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.  
By the stream & o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight,  
Softest clothing woolly bright;  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice:  
Little Lamb who made thee  
Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,  
Little Lamb I'll tell thee:  
He is called by thy name,  
For he calls himself a Lamb:  
He is meek & he is mild,  
He became a little child:  
I a child & thou a lamb,  
We are called by his name.  
Little Lamb God bless thee.  
Little Lamb God bless thee.



"The Tyger"  
from *Songs of Experience*

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,  
In the forests of the night:  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies,  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes!  
On what wings dare he aspire!  
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? what dread grasp,  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears  
And water'd heaven with their tears:  
Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger, Tyger burning bright,  
In the forests of the night:  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?



# The Lamb

## SUMMARY

The poem begins with the question, "Little Lamb, who made thee?" The speaker, a child, asks the lamb about its origins: how it came into being, how it acquired its particular manner of feeding, its "clothing" of wool, its "tender voice." In the next stanza, the speaker attempts a riddling answer to his own question: the lamb was made by one who "calls himself a Lamb," one who resembles in his gentleness both the child and the lamb. The poem ends with the child bestowing a blessing on the lamb.

## ANALYSIS

- **Themes:** innocence, the creation, the nature of God
- **Setting:** idyllic ("*stream*", "*mead*", "*vales*")
- **Key images:** the Lamb, the child, Christ (as the Good Shepherd & as the Lamb of God), the identification poet / child / Christ
- **Rhythm:** slow, comforting
- **Rhetorical Devices:** **repetitions** both of lines and of single words  
**archaic forms** ("*thee*", "*thou*", "*thy*", "*dost*")

# The Tyger

## SUMMARY

The poem begins with the speaker asking a fearsome tiger what kind of divine being could have created it: "What immortal hand or eye/ Could frame they fearful symmetry?" Each subsequent stanza contains further questions, all of which refine this first one. From what part of the cosmos could the tiger's fiery eyes have come, and who would have dared to handle that fire? What sort of physical presence, and what kind of dark craftsmanship, would have been required to "twist the sinews" of the tiger's heart? The speaker wonders how, once that horrible heart "began to beat," its creator would have had the courage to continue the job. Comparing the creator to a blacksmith, he ponders about the anvil and the furnace that the project would have required and the smith who could have wielded them. And when the job was done, the speaker wonders, how would the creator have felt? "Did he smile his work to see?" Could this possibly be the same being who made the lamb?

## ANALYSIS

- **Themes:** experience, the creation, the nature of God
- **Setting:** wild, industrial
- **Key images:** the tiger, its creator (as a daring, courageous being and as blacksmith)
- **Rhythm:** hammering, disquieting
- **Rhetorical devices:** **repetitions** both of lines and of single words  
**archaic forms** ("*thee*", "*thy*", "*thine*")

## CONCLUSIONS

- The key point is **the nature of God**: the question is whether the same God who made the lamb also made the tiger.
- If so, **the lamb** and **the tiger** seem to represent
  - ❖ two **different sides of God**,
  - ❖ two **different aspects of existence**.
- **Experience** is NOT evil: it is just the other side of **innocence**, its **necessary opposite in order to have progress**.