



Infant Sorrow

This text belongs to a sequence of poems, written five years after Songs of Innocence, which deals with things unknown or only hinted at in the previous collection. Here the poet introduces the world of experience and the sickly consciousness of it. When they are read together, the two collections represent the world as it is envisioned by what Blake calls 'two contrary states of the human soul'.

William Blake
Songs of Experience
(1794)

My mother **groaned**! My father wept,
Into the dangerous world I **leapt**,
Helpless, **naked**, **pip**ing loud,
Like a **fiend** hid in a cloud.

- 5 Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my **swaddling** bands,
Bound and weary, I thought best
To **sulk** upon my mother's **breast**.

LITERARY COMPETENCE

> VOCABULARY

1 READ the poem and match the highlighted words with their Italian translation.

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 fasce per neonato | 6 urlando |
| 2 balzai | 7 gemette |
| 3 combattendo | 8 diavolo |
| 4 nudo | 9 costretto ed esausto |
| 5 fare lo scontroso | 10 petto |

> COMPETENCE: READING AND UNDERSTANDING A TEXT

2 READ the poem again and correct the following statements.

- The poem is a dialogue between the poet and a baby.
- It deals with a moment in the narrator's childhood.
- The narrator's parents were both pleased.
- The narrator himself was happy.
- The baby rested peacefully in his father's arms.
- The baby felt comfortable in his clothes.
- The baby sucked milk joyfully.

> COMPETENCE: ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING A TEXT

3 WRITE down the rhyme scheme.

4 CIRCLE the words referring to the baby and complete the table below. What condition does Blake emphasise?

Weakness	Strength



5 FIND the simile contained in the poem and explain its terms. Then answer the following questions.

- 1 Do they convey a conventional image of infancy?
- 2 What other images in the poem support this view?

6 FOCUS on the figure of the parents. What connotation do they acquire in the poem?

7 CIRCLE the image used by Blake to convey the idea of experience. What is it connected with?

8 DEFINE the tone of the poem.

9 EXPLAIN how the poem is related to the collection it belongs to. Consider its title, style, language and theme.

➤ **COMPETENCE: LINKING LITERATURE TO PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

10 DISCUSS. What do you generally associate with the words 'childhood' and 'adulthood'?