



She Walks in Beauty

George Gordon Byron
(1815)

In June, 1814, several months before he met and married his first wife, Annabella Milbanke, Lord Byron attended a party at Lady Sitwell's. There he met his cousin, the beautiful Mrs Wilmot, who was wearing a black spangled mourning dress. Lord Byron was struck by the blend of lights and shades created by his cousin's dark hair and fair face. The poem was published a year later and included in a number of songs that Byron had written to be set to traditional Jewish tunes by Isaac Nathan.

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes¹ and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
5 Thus mellowed² to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies³.



Key word of the poem:

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired⁴ the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress⁵,
10 Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling place⁶.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
15 The smiles that win, the tints that glow⁷,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,

A heart whose love is innocent!

- 1 climes. Climi.
- 2 mellowed. Addolciti.
- 3 to gaudy day denies. Nega al giorno pacchiano.
- 4 impaired. Danneggiato.
- 5 raven tress. Treccia corvina.
- 6 dwelling place. Dimora.
- 7 tints that glow. Tinte che brillano.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

1 READ the poem and write a caption to describe the content of each stanza.

Stanza 1

Stanza 2

Stanza 3

2 LOOK at the visual analysis of the text and write down what each highlight and mark represents.

		

3 DISCUSS the following questions in pairs.

- 1 What does the woman bring together in her beauty?
- 2 Would the woman's beauty be spoilt if darkness and lightness were not in the right proportion (lines 7-10)?
- 3 Does the woman's outer beauty mirror her inner one?
- 4 What is the Romantic idea expressed in the poem? Do you think it is a declaration of love or a statement of admiration?

**4 COMPLETE** the summary with the words from the box.

pure	brilliant	peacefulness	daylight	dynamic
appearance	harmony	unnamed	clouds	inner



The poet describes an **(1)** woman who 'walks in beauty.' It is not just her beautiful face to strike the poet, it is the **(2)** image of the whole living, walking lady that he finds beautiful. In contrast to popular tradition, her beauty is not only described as **(3)** , but has something dark in it; it is compared to a night with no **(4)** and a lot of stars. This introduces the contrast between light and dark in the poem. The woman's **(5)** and especially her eyes create a sort of **(6)** between 'dark' and 'bright.' Her beauty is also contrasted to the garish **(7)** In the second stanza, the poet turns to her **(8)** life, seeing her external beauty as an expression of **(9)** thoughts. In the final stanza he returns to her face, but again sees the silent expression of peace and calm in her cheek, brow, and smiles. Her pleasant facial expressions clearly express her inner goodness and **(10)**