

The Echoing Green

Summary

The poem *The Echoing Green* (originally *Ecchoing Green*) by William Blake is written in the appreciation of nature in simple terms. However, if we go deep into it, we will find the theme of life and death in the world. The poem is told by a young child who is playing in the “Echoing Green” park.

The poem has been divided into three stanzas which if we go deep, depict the three stages of life. Each stanza is divided into 10 lines and the rhyme scheme is AABB. Another interesting thing worth noticing is that the first two stanzas end in “On the Ecchoing Green” while the final stanza ends in “On the darkening Green”. We will discuss this in the end

Stanza 1

The poet says that ***the sun*** rises ***and*** makes ***the skies happy*** i.e. when the sun arises, light spreads across the sky making it look beautiful and fresh. Next, he says that ***the merry bells ring to welcome the Spring***. ‘Merry Bells’ probably refer to the Church Bells which ring in the morning. They are merry because they welcome the beautiful morning of spring.

Ad

The sky-lark and thrush and the birds of the bush sing louder around to the bells’ cheerful sound. Skylark and thrush fly high in the air while the birds of bush like sparrows remain near the ground. Thus according to the poet, all the birds also sing in the spring morning loudly which adds to the joyful sound of bells.

In simple words, the chirping of all the birds and the ringing of bell welcome the spring. In the next line, the poet says that ***while*** all these things are going on, their ***sports*** are going ***on the echoing green.***

For the first time, in the poem, we come to know that the speaker is a child who is playing with others in the green park which is echoing. Echo means a reflection of sound. But here echo symbolises [the cycle of life](#) because all this happens every morning and keeps repeating.

Ad

Stanza 2

The child says that ***Old John, with white hair*** laughs ***away care***. 'Old John' simply refers to an old man and 'white hair' depict his final years of life. ***Laugh away*** means forgetting the problems of life by being happy and laughing. 'Care' here means the thoughts of being old and fear of death.

Thus the lines mean that John, who is an old man with grey hair is also in the park and is laughing without caring about his old age and approaching death. Note that in the previous stanza, the children are too playing but don't know about death or old age experiences. Hence they are innocent while this old man knows about all this but ignores them by laughing.

He is sitting ***under the oak*** tree along with other ***old*** people. The oak tree here not only means a tree in the park but also strength and longevity, and shelter for the old men. It is also a symbol of experience like old men. There are other old men as well. All of them ***laugh at the play*** of children. This is the laugh which we find in the first line of this stanza.

Ad

Seeing the children playing, they start memorising about their own ***youth-time***. Like the children, they too used to enjoy when they were young ***on the echoing green***. As described earlier, here echoing green refers to the cycle of life.

Earlier it was the old men who used to enjoy and now that they are old, their place is taken by the new children and this cycle will continue for eternity.

Stanza 3

The children get tired and no one can enjoy. It is the time when ***the sun*** is about to ***descend*** i.e. darkness is about to come. All of the children stop playing and go back to home. They (***brothers and sisters***) sit in ***the laps of their mothers*** like the bird chicks flock around their mother in the nest.