

## Spring by Gerard Manley Hopkins

'Spring' by [Gerard Manley Hopkins](#) describes the joys of spring against a backdrop of religious references to the Garden of Eden and sin.

The poem begins with the speaker giving a fairly straightforward description of spring and the wonders it can bring. He finds the season to be cleansing and rejuvenating. This is made clear through the depiction of a thrush flying through the woods and "rins[ing] and wring[ing]" the world around it. The winter, and with it mistakes and sins, are washed away.

The religious [imagery](#) continues to develop in the second stanza as the speaker directly addresses God. He asks that Christ make sure that the "innocent" children are saved from the sin that doomed the Garden of Eden.

'Spring' by Gerard Manley Hopkins is a fourteen-line poem that conforms to the pattern of an Italian, or Petrarchan, [sonnet](#). This means that beyond having fourteen lines, the poem also follows a pattern of ABBAABBA in the first eight lines. This section of the poem is known as the [octet](#). In the second section, known as the [sestet](#), the six lines follow a pattern of CDCDCD. While the sestet is known to vary in [Petrarchan sonnets](#), the pattern Hopkins chose for 'Spring' is one of the most traditional.

Another feature that is common to sonnets is a turn or [volta](#). This is seen through a change in [speaker](#), [setting](#), or belief. Often times the second half of the poem provides an answer to a question posed in the first. In the case of 'Spring' there is a distinct separation between the octet and sestet, this signals the change and also emphasizes the difference between the two parts. The first [stanza](#) is a clear depiction of the beauty of spring. While the second is addressed to Christ, willing him to save the innocent children.

In regards to the [meter](#), the pattern is not the traditional one that is usually associated with sonnets. Normally, Petrarchan and [Shakespearean sonnets](#) have ten syllables per line and follow a pattern known as [iambic pentameter](#). In the case of 'Spring' Hopkins changed up the number of syllables, in some cases shrinking it down to nine and in others stretching the lines out to thirteen syllables.

The poem is a perfect example of a technique Hopkins was well-known for and can be seen in multiple pieces of his poetry, known as sprung [rhyme](#). Sprung rhyme is a kind of rhyme that clusters together with the stressed and unstressed syllables. They appear suddenly together, giving the phrases they emphasize special importance.

## Analysis of *Spring*

Stanza One .....Lines 1-4

Nothing is so beautiful as Spring .....

In the first stanza of the poem the speaker begins by giving a simple judgement about spring, there is nothing more beautiful. The speaker associates the weeds of spring, which grow up in great numbers, with wheels. This is a strange connection, but the important association is to do with motion. Everything is moving. The weeds are "long and lovely and lush." This is a great example of [alliteration](#), seen through the [repetition](#) of the "we" in "weeds" and "wheels" and the "l."

Hopkins uses a [metaphor](#) in the third line to compare thrush eggs to "little heavens." This is only the first reference to heaven, that appears in '*Spring*.' It becomes clear later on that the connections between heaven and spring are important to the speaker.

He adds on an image of the bird which laid the eggs, the thrush, singing as it moves through the woods. The trees are described as "echoing," and the bird's movements as cleansing.

Lines 5-8      In the next four lines, the speaker begins by describing the listening experience as a spiritual one. When this particular speaker is out in the woods and he hears and sees the thrush in amongst the trees "it strikes like lightning." This is a refreshing, and as stated in the fourth line, cleaning experience.

Hopkins goes on to use [anaphora](#), repeating the word "The" at the beginning of the fifth, sixth, and seventh lines. The speaker describes the "glassy peartree" and the "leaves and blossoms" which are so numerous. They touch the "descending blue" of the sky. It is so broad that it seems to come down closer to earth. Everything is becoming more spiritual and heavenly in this scene.

In the last lines of this section, the speaker combines the images of the blossoms and leaves with that of "the racing lamb." The lamb is a traditional [symbol](#) of spring and rebirth, as well as being closely associated with Christianity. All these features of the natural world "have fair their fling."

Stanza Two

The fourth line continues the description. Just as spring is going to fade in the near future, so too did humanity's time in Eden come to an end. It was soured "with sinning." The speaker wants "Christ, lord," to take care of the world and keep the sin away. Hopkins' speaker is especially concerned with the innocent minds of the "Mayday" girls and boys. These youth are the most susceptible to the sin that is going to enter into their worlds.

These lines are somewhat jumbled and hard to dissect. This is part of the turn in the speaker's [tone](#) as he becomes more desperate. He is urgently praying to Christ to find a way to save the children and bring them to religion. The poem ends with the speaker stating that the kids are being "worthy of winning," or, being brought into the light of God.