

1. What feelings does the nightingale cause the speaker to have in the first stanza? Why?

The nightingale produces a sense of despair in the speaker through its singing and carelessness because it portrays a confident happiness. In singing "of summer in full-throated ease," the nightingale demonstrates the simplistic nature of its life and represents content in this, making the speaker envious not of its state of happiness, but of its representation of satisfaction with life (10). This evokes a sense of envy from the speaker, because the nightingale is portraying happiness with disregard to its placement in the world and the conditions which it inhabits. Because this feeling is evoked by the speaker, the first stanza conveys a sense of discontent directly in the nightingale, but more importantly, indirectly in his own life. In disapproval of the nightingale's representation of happiness and overall freedom, the speaker's feelings express a sense of discontent with his placement in the world in relation to the people, things, and situations he is forced to face as a human being in society, as opposed to a bird in nature.

2. What does the speaker mean when he says, in the fourth stanza, "for I will fly to thee/...on the viewless wings of Poesy?"(ll.31,33)?

Being that the speaker is envious of not only the happiness the nightingale conveys, but also the freedom it represents, this line is meant to point out the means by which the speaker attempts to connect with such an ideal embodiment of his desires. When understanding the word "Poesy" to mean poetry, it becomes clear the speaker believes the boundless limits and general freedom enabled through poetry, will function as the channel which will allow him to share the feelings of freedom and content with the nightingale. The art of poetry produces a sense of freedom for the speaker which in a sense allow him to take flight along with the bird, and become as carefree and unrestricted. This sense of freedom is what the "viewless wings of Poesy" stand to represent; they are product of poetry which finally connects the speaker to his desired traits of the nightingale (33).

3. What contrasts does the speaker draw between himself and the nightingale in the seventh and eighth stanzas?

In the first line of the seventh stanza, "thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!" the speaker draws the distinction between the inevitable death of everything that is born, except that of the "immortal Bird" (61). For the speaker, the bird represents an unchanging condition of life and the content that was once conveyed by this bird is now seen as being unattainable through the contrasts presented. At this point the speaker falls back into a state of sadness with the realization that the content and freedom the bird represents is unchanging, and is coming to terms with his placement in the world. Unfortunately the speaker is pessimistic and after contrasting himself from the nightingale, realizes his actual placement and purpose in life is nothing more than awaiting his own death. When saying "fled is that music" the speaker is implying that death is the only true escape from his negative feelings of envy, desire, and general discontent with life (80).