

Learner Resource 5 “The Tyger” – rhythm, syntax and lexis

Look at the two versions of verse three that follow. The second is the one that is featured in the collection you are studying. The first is a version included in Dr Malkin's *A Father's Memoire of his Child* (1806). Dr Malkin was a friend of Blake's, and in the introduction to his book, he included a selection of Blake's poems which had been given to him by Blake himself.

1)

And what shoulder, and what art
 Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
 When thy heart began to beat,
 What dread hand forged thy dread feet?

2)

And what shoulder, & what art,
 Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
 When thy heart began to beat,
 What dread hand? & what dread feet?

In pairs discuss the differences in the final sentence of each version:

Who is the subject of the final line in version 1, for example?

Who is the subject of the final line in version 2?

Can you decide as a class what type of sentence “What dread hand? & what dread feet?” is? Can you decide to whom the hands and the feet belong?

Compare to the line “I a child and thou a lamb” in “The Lamb” and discuss the similarities.

In a pair, or individually, write the next line for “The Tyger”, to provide a verb and a subject for the sentence. Your guidance is that your line

- should have seven syllables in it
- should have four stresses with a trochaic rhythm (stress, unstress)
- should include the lexis of fire, or furnaces of forging.

For example:

What dread hand? & what dread feet

Stamped thy form in firey heat.

Your teacher will now take your lines and read them out, keeping the writers anonymous, as well as reading out the line that Blake originally wrote and then rejected. You need to decide which is the original, and points will be awarded for correct identification of Blake's version, and if other people vote for yours.



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Blake's original version reads: What dread hand? & what dread feet? // Could fetch it from the furnace deep?

Compare it to the poem you have in your collection, and discuss as a class what is gained and what is lost in the final version.

Look at this transcription of the manuscript of the first draft of "The Tyger":

Tyger Tyger burning bright
In the forests of the night
What immortal hand and eye
~~could dare~~ frame thy fearful symmetry

In what distant deeps or skies	Burnt in distant deeps or skies
Burnt in Burnt the fire of thine eyes	The cruel fire of thine eyes
The cruel	Could heart descend or Wings inspire
On what wings dare he aspire	What the hand dare seize the fire
What the hand dare seize the fire	

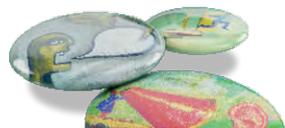
And what shoulder & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart
When thy heart began to beat
What dread hand & what dread feet

~~Could fetch it from the furnace deep~~
~~And in thy horrid ribs dare steep?~~
~~In the well of sanguine woe~~
~~In what clay & in what mould~~
~~Were thy eyes of fury roll'd?~~

~~What the hammer what the chain~~
~~Where where~~ In what furnace was thy brain
What the anvil what the ~~arm arm~~

Grasp clasp

Dread grasp



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~~Could~~ dare its deadly terrors ~~clasp~~

When the stars threw down their spears

And waterd heaven with their tears

And ~~did he laugh~~ his work to see

Dare he ~~smile~~ laugh

~~What the ankle shoulder what the knee~~

~~Did~~ Dare he who made the lamb make thee

Tyger Tyger burning bright

In the forests of the night

What immortal hand and eye

Dare ~~form~~ frame thy fearful symmetry

Taking the role of editors, compare this draft with the version you have in your collection.

Group one:

Analyse the changes in modal verbs, focusing, for example, on line four verse one, and two other lines of your choice.

Group two:

Analyse the use of punctuation, particularly looking at how the punctuation affects the rhythm. You might focus on line four verse three, for example, and on two other lines of your choice.

Group three:

Analyse the use of verbs, focusing, for example, on line three verse four (on the substitution of "smile" for "laugh"), and on two other examples of your choice.

Group four:

Analyse the choices of nouns, focusing, for example, on the deletion of "ankle" and "knee" in the manuscript, and two other examples of your choice.

Group five:

Analyse the use of adjectives, focusing, for example, on line two verse two (on the omission of the adjective "cruel") and two others of your choice.

Report back to the class.

