



Fern Hill by Dylan Thomas

What is something the head students often say in their farewell speeches?



Structure

- Six stanza (nine lines each)
- Each line has a specific number of syllables (14, 14, 9, 6, 9, 14, 14, 7, 9) which is the same for each stanza – makes the poem sound like a song (lyrical)
- The first 3 stanzas ~ the speaker's experience as a child on the farm.
- The last 3 stanzas ~ focus on the loss of innocence

Themes

- The celebration of childhood and innocence
- The beauty and harmony of nature (being one with nature)
- The end of childhood and growing up

Themes

- The power of time
 - Time grants periods of happiness
 - Nothing lasts forever
 - You can't stay young forever



The Picture of Dorian Gray

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Speaker's childhood

- Innocent and free, full of joy

"Now as I was young and easy" (line 1)

"happy as the grass was green" (line 2)

"And I was green and carefree" (line 10)

"About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home" (line 11)

Speaker's childhood

- He felt as if he were ruler over all his surroundings

“honoured among wagons, I was prince of the apple towns” (line 5)

“I lordly had the trees and leaves” (line 6)

“Golden in the heydays of his eyes” (line 5)

“famous among the barns” (line 10)

Speaker's childhood

- Lots of natural and farming imagery

“Under the apple boughs” (line 1)

boughs = branches

“The night above the dingle starry” (line 3)

dingle = valley of trees

Speaker's childhood

- Full of natural and farming imagery

“Trail with daisies and barley/Down the rivers of the windfall light”
(line 8-9)

“Green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the
calves/sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and
cold” (line 15-16)

“the hay/fields as high as the house” (line 19-20)

Speaker's childhood

- Full of natural and farming imagery

“as I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away” (line 24)

“the nightjars/flying with the ricks, and the horses/flash into the dark (line 25-27)

Personification of time

- Time allowed him this freedom and joy

“Time let me hail and climb” (line 4)

“Time let me play and be/golden in the mercy of his means” (line 5-6)

Innocence

- To the speaker, the farm is a holy place.

“the sabbath rang slowly/In the pebbles of the holy streams” (line 17-18)

“fields of praise” (line 36)

Innocence

- The farm is like the Garden of Eden at the beginning of time

“it was Adam and maiden” (line 30)

“the sun grew round that very day” (line 32)

“So it must have been after the birth of simple light/In the first spinning place” (line 33)

Tone

- Stanza 1-3: the poet's experience as a child on the farm
 - the beauty of nature
 - his freedom and innocence

Tone: joyous, euphoric

Inevitability of it all ending

- As he thinks back, he recognises that time was running out without his realising

“the sun that is young once only”(line 12)

“All the sun long it was running” (line 19)

“I ran my heedless ways” (line 40)

Inevitability of it all ending

- As he thinks back, he recognises that time was running out without his realising

“And then to awake” (line 28)

“the sun born over and over” (line 39)

Nothing lasts forever

- Childhood (symbolising/associated with innocence) is ending

“nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning such few and such morning songs
Before the children green and golden
Follow him out of grace” (line 42-45)

Nothing lasts forever

“nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning such few and such morning songs
Before the children green and golden
Follow him out of grace” (line 42-45)

It happened before he even realised

Nothing lasts forever

“nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that **time allows**
In all his tuneful turning such few and such morning songs
Before the children green and golden
Follow him out of grace” (line 42-45)

Time personified; alliteration

Nothing lasts forever

“nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning **such few** and such morning songs
Before the children green and golden
Follow him out of grace” (line 42-45)

Childhood is fleeting

Nothing lasts forever

“nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning such few and such morning songs
Before **the children** green and golden
Follow him out of grace” (line 42-45)

Childhood is associated with innocence

Nothing lasts forever

“nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning such few and such morning songs
Before the children **green** and golden
Follow him out of grace” (line 42-45)

The freshness and growth of green represents youth

Nothing lasts forever

“nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning such few and such morning songs
Before the children green and **golden**
Follow him out of grace” (line 42-45)

The speaker sees childhood as a sacred special time

Nothing lasts forever

“nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning such few and such morning songs
Before the children green and golden
Follow him out of grace” (line 42-45)

Time leads the speaker out of childhood (grace) and into adulthood

Nothing lasts forever

- Childhood (symbolising/associated with innocence) is ending

Nothing lasts forever

“Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadows of my hand
In the moon that that is always rising,
Nor that riding to sleep
I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land” (line 46-51)

Repetition emphasises how oblivious he was to the transience of childhood

Nothing lasts forever

“Nothing I cared, in the **lamb white** days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadows of my hand
In the moon that that is always rising,
Nor that riding to sleep
I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land” (line 46-51)

purity, innocence, youth

Nothing lasts forever

“Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time ① **would take me**
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadows of my hand
In the moon that that is always rising,
Nor that riding to sleep
I should hear ② **him fly** with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land” (line 46-51)

Personifies time rapidly leading him into adulthood

Nothing lasts forever

“Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadows of my hand
In the moon that that is always rising,
Nor that riding to sleep
I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land” (line 46-51)

The image emphasises time passing

Nothing lasts forever

“Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadows of my hand
In the moon that that is always rising,
Nor that riding to sleep
I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the **farm forever fled** from the childless land” (line 46-51)

The farm represents his childhood but now it is gone (notice the alliteration)

Nothing lasts forever

“Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadows of my hand
In the moon that that is always rising,
Nor that riding to sleep
I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from **the childless land**” (line 46-51)

He is left behind in adulthood

Nothing lasts forever

- Even as he was enjoying his childhood, he was moving inevitably towards its ending

“Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

Nothing lasts forever

“Oh as **I was young and easy** in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

He was carefree, oblivious to time running out

Nothing lasts forever

“Oh as I was young and easy in **the mercy of his means,**
Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

Links back to stanza 2

Time allowed him to enjoy this golden time but, at the same time, he was always bound by time as well

Nothing lasts forever

“Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me **green and dying**
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

Paradoxical

A change from “green and golden” from the previous stanza
From the moment we are born, our childhood is running out

Nothing lasts forever

“Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying
Though I **sang in my chains** like the sea.

Describes the joy of childhood while bound by the inevitability of time running out

Nothing lasts forever

“Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying
Though I **sang** in my chains **like the sea**.”

The simile highlights how the speaker was in harmony with nature

Tone

- Stanza 4-6: focus on the loss of innocence
 - time passes
 - childhood inevitably ends
 - loss of the freedom and innocence of youth

Tone: sorrowful, grieving