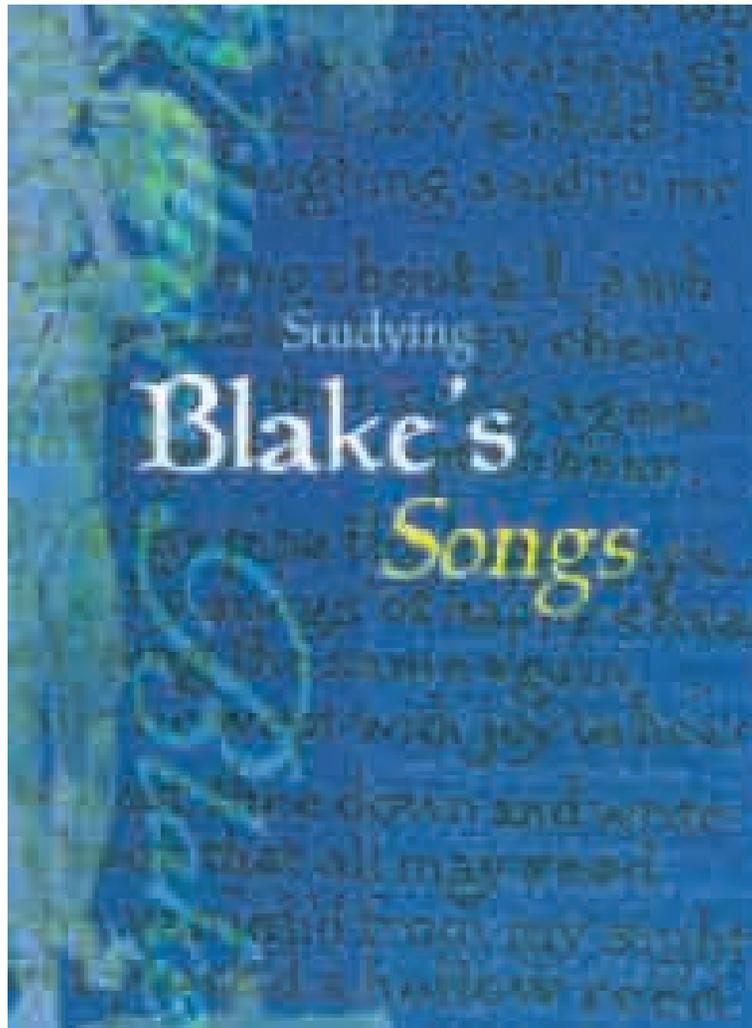


Blake's Songs: an EMC Study Guide



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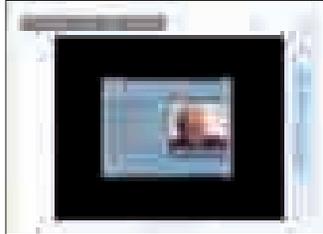
Pages 1-124 are activity sheets for you to print out. They look like this:



Activities which use a video clip are indicated with this icon: 

Clicking on this icon will take you directly to the video page.

Pages 125-133 are video pages (like a DVD). They look like this:



These pages include all the video clips referred to in the activity sheets.

2. How do I play the video clips?

First make sure you have saved the file to your desktop.

To play the video clips you need to open the file in Adobe Reader 9 or above.

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Follow the instructions to install the latest version of the Adobe Reader program. Once it is installed and you have agreed the license, open the program.

Go to 'File – Open' and navigate your way to the PDF you have downloaded. **NB: The video files will not display or play if you open the PDF in Adobe Reader 8 or below.**

Move your cursor onto the video image. Click and the video will begin to play within the page.

To play the video clips to a class you will need a computer, data projector and screen.

3. How can I play the video clips full screen?

Position the cursor on the video image. On a PC: right click. On a Mac either right click or 'Control+click'.

4. How do I stop the video clips playing?

Either move to another page in the PDF or click the Play/Pause button on the control panel, as shown here. **NB: The control panel is visible only when you move your cursor over the video image.**



5. What do I do after the video clip has finished playing in full screen mode?

To exit full screen mode, press the escape button on your computer.

Studying Blake's Songs

English
& Media
Centre

Credits

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Interview with David Punter

Section title in the study guide	Title of video clip
Blake in his times	Blake in the 18th century
Exploring innocence and experience	<i>Innocence and Experience</i>
The context of Blake's work	Blake's method of working/engraving
Exploring paired poems	The Garden of Love
The Divine Image & The Human Abstract	Blake's religious views
The Lamb and The Tyger	The Tyger
The Chimney Sweeper (<i>I and E</i>)	Holy Thursday and The Chimney Sweeper
Nurse's Song (<i>I and E</i>)	Nurse's Song (<i>I and E</i>)
Language, structure and form	Language, structure and form

Introduction to the study guide

Songs of Innocence and of Experience is a popular choice as a set text for AS or A2. The apparent simplicity and directness of the poems gives them an immediate appeal for students, while the underlying complexity of thought demands a wide range of literary and linguistic understandings and an awareness of the context of Blake's period. Blake's openness to different interpretations make the *Songs* a particularly interesting text to explore for the varied, sometimes contradictory readings.

This publication provides varied classroom activities to fulfil all of the AS and A2 Assessment Objectives. The study guide includes:

- Before reading activities, to raise key ideas that will inform a first reading.
- Work on loose clusters of poems, grouped around key themes, such as childhood, religion, social comment and so on. This allows students to focus closely on particular poems, in the context of a wider group. At the end of work on a cluster of poems, students are encouraged to range beyond the clustering, so that they think flexibly about relationships between the poems.
- After reading activities, which range across the collection, introducing fuller explorations of contexts and interpretations and support for writing in exams.

Using the material

Although the material is organised sequentially, it is not essential to follow the sequence rigidly, or do all of the activities. Teachers should select according to the specification being followed and the needs of their students.

Before reading

Blake in his times

In these activities you will:

- think about the times in which Blake lived
- consider people's reactions to Blake during his lifetime and since
- compare what you have discovered about Blake with what you know of more modern artists, poets and musicians.

Blake – a few dates

- Look carefully at the key dates in Blake's life, then, in pairs, explore the questions below.
 - What kind of world might Blake have been living in? Find adjectives to express your view (e.g. peaceful? stable? rural? dangerous?).
 - What might have changed for Blake between his youth and his adult life?
 - What else can you tell from these dates and facts about the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*?

1750-	Process of industrialisation begins
1757	Born, in London
1767	Apprenticed as an engraver
1775-1783	War of American Independence and 1776, Declaration of Independence
1780	Gordon Riots in London – Blake sees the burning of Newgate Prison
1782	Marries Catherine
1784	Sets up print shop; the business fails within a few years
1788-89	Becomes involved in the Swedenborgian New Church, setting himself apart from orthodox religion
1789	French Revolution; <i>Songs of Innocence</i> is engraved and privately printed
1791-2	Thomas Paine publishes <i>The Rights of Man</i> ; it is read and heard by two million people – a fifth of the total population of Britain
1792	The Paris Massacres – the ideals of the Revolution are destroyed by tyranny
1793	Execution of Louis XVI; France declares war on England; in England the Aliens' Act restricts liberty of foreigners; Traitorous Correspondence Bill gives the state the right to open mail; <i>America</i> and <i>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</i> are published
1794	<i>Songs of Innocence and of Experience</i> is engraved; Pitt suspends Habeas Corpus (which protects defendants from unjustified detention) and curbs the freedom of the press (the 'Gagging Acts')
1795	Pitt introduces Treasonable Practices and Seditious Meetings Bills
1799	Combination Laws suppress trade unionism
1803	Blake is accused of cursing the King and is charged with 'sedition' but finally acquitted of the charge
1811-13	Luddite rioters start machine breaking (17 rioters executed in 1813)
1815-17	Civil unrest sparked by bad harvest
1819	Peterloo massacre; repressive measures to prevent sedition
1824	Repeal of Combinations Act
1827	Blake dies



Blake in the eighteenth century – David Punter

- Watch the video clip in which Professor David Punter talks about Blake in the eighteenth century.
- Identify three key points that you have learned about Blake and share these.



'Riot in Broad Street, London' (1780) © Museum of London

What people have said about Blake

Before you start reading Blake's poetry, you might like to see what people have said about him and his work.

- Read the quotations on page 7 and talk about:
 - what kind of expectations you now have of the poems
 - what kind of individual you think Blake seems to have been
 - any apparent contradictions in the comments made about him (for instance 'childlike' but also a 'genius')
 - any comments that you find particularly perplexing or intriguing. (You could highlight these and come back to them to see what you make of them once you have read a few of the poems.)
 - whether you notice any changes in people's view of him over time, for instance between comments in his lifetime and comments in the early twenty-first century.
- Pick one or more of the figures listed below who seem to you to have similarities with Blake. Identify any quotations (or sections of the video clips) which suggest this link to you.

Madonna	John Lennon	James Dean	Eminem
Benjamin Zephaniah	Van Gogh	Nelson Mandela	Tracey Emin
Prince Charles	Johnny Cash	Bono	Stravinsky

He has made several irregular and unfinished attempts at poetry. Benjamin Heath Malkin, 1806	1
Shall I call him Artist or Genius – or Mystic – or Madman? Probably he is all ... Henry Crabb Robinson, 1825	2
The faults are equally conspicuous ... They amount to an utter want of elaboration, and even, in many cases, to an inattention to the ordinary rules of grammar. J.J. Garth Wilkinson, 1839	3
They seemed to sound like nonsense verses as we read them aloud ... others have a real charm in their wildness and oddness. Edward Quillian, 1848	4
Blake's poetry has the unpleasantness of great poetry. T.S. Eliot, 1922	5
I think it is Blake's childlikeness that always subjects his genius to being put in its place by the grown-up world. Joseph Wickstead, 1928	6
Blake was the poet of eternity, but he was also the poet of late eighteenth-century London. Peter Ackroyd, 1995	7
The unnerving directness of his lyrics. Andrew Motion, 2000	8
Blake is a great radical, dissenting, one-nation poet. Tom Paulin, 2000	9
Compelled to shock and provoke. Matthew Collings, 2000	10
A great painter, poet, visionary. Matthew Collings, 2000	11
Blake was against anything anyone else thought. Matthew Collings, 2000	12
He lived through the rise of industrialisation, commercialisation and rationalism. He was against all three. Matthew Collings, 2000	13
He was an outcast, but he seems always to have made an extra effort to cast himself out. He would be incredibly tiresome in our world. Matthew Collings, 2000	14
A combination of extremes. His vision of civilisation as inevitably chaotic and contradictory mirrors the political turmoil of his age. BBC, 2004	15

Reading a first poem – Infant Joy

In these activities you will:

- read and discuss one of Blake’s poems, thinking about whether it is taken from *Songs of Innocence* or *Songs of Experience*
- draft your own companion poem to ‘Infant Joy’
- read the poem Blake wrote as a companion to ‘Infant Joy’ and compare it with your versions.

Reading Infant Joy

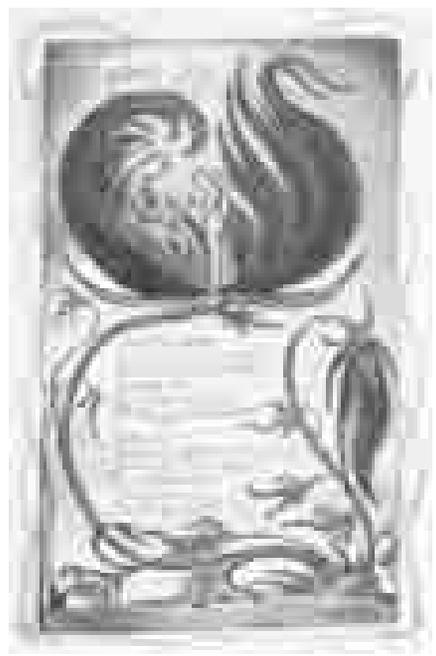
Printed below is one of Blake’s poems.

- Read the poem.

Infant Joy

‘I have no name;
I am but two days old.’
What shall I call thee?
‘I happy am,
Joy is my name.’
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy but two days old,
Sweet joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee.



- Talk about your first responses. You might want to think about who is talking at different points in the poem. To help you, experiment with reading the poem aloud in the different voices.
- Now think back to the quotations you read about Blake and his times. Are any of them useful in helping you to think about the poem?
- Can you decide which collection this poem comes from, *Songs of Innocence* or *Songs of Experience*? Why? List all the reasons you can think of for your decision.

Writing a companion poem to Infant Joy

- Blake wrote a companion poem to go with this one in the other collection. If you had to write a complementary or contrasting poem called ‘Infant Sorrow’, what would you write? Try writing your own version.
- Read all of your poems out loud and talk about the ways in which they draw on features of the original and what moods and ideas are expressed in the poems.
- Now read Blake’s companion poem and talk about how it compares with ‘Infant Joy’ and with your own poems.

Infant Sorrow

My mother groan'd, my father wept;
Into the dangerous world I leapt,
Helpless, naked, piping loud,
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my swadling bands,
Bound and weary, I thought best
To sulk upon my mother's breast.



Annotating the poem

This activity uses 'Infant Joy' to show how annotating a poem can be a very helpful way of:

- noting several different possibilities
- asking yourself questions
- recording a class discussion
- keeping a record of your own ideas, for future use.

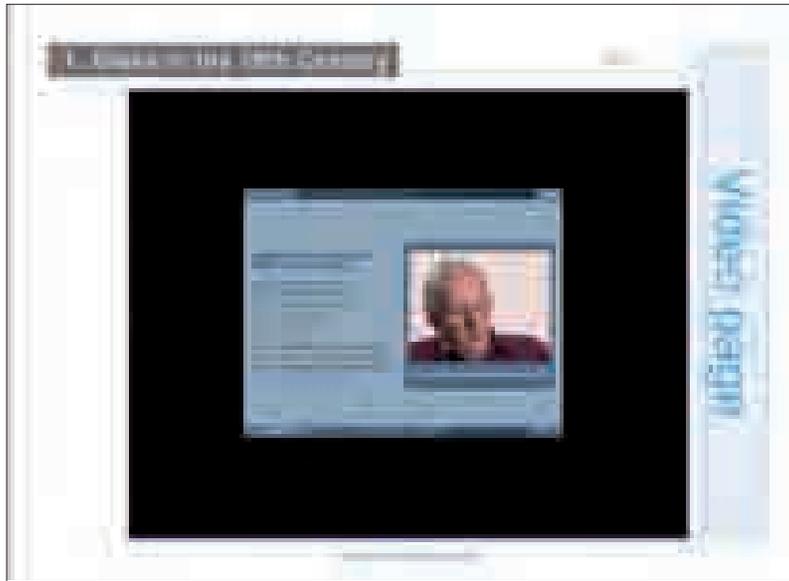
- In pairs, annotate a copy of 'Infant Joy' with all your thoughts and ideas about the poem.
- Talk about what's been noted down, the level of detail and whether anything has been missed out. You could remind yourselves of what you are expected to write about when exploring a poem and fill in any obvious gaps.
- Now look at an example of an annotated version of the poem on page 10. Talk about similarities and differences between it and your own annotations. Add any points you feel you have missed that you'd like to record for future reference.

Video pages

The download you are previewing is a Video PDF publication.

This preview does not include the video pages.

In the download video pages (like a DVD) are included at the end of the PDF. They look like this:



These pages include all the video clips referred to in the activity sheets.

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