

# Studying Blake's Songs

**English**  
*& Media*  
**Centre**

# Credits

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# CD ROM contents

## Blake interactive

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<b>Additional resources</b>		Complete interview with David Punter	Video
		Poems A-Z	
		Illuminated poems A-Z	

## Blake extras

**Picture Power** still image editing program, with 40 images of London

**Word files of *Songs of Innocence* and of *Experience***

**Nurse's Song** interactive

**Full publication**

# Video/DVD contents

All video clips are included on the CD ROM. However, if you are not able to access the clips on the CD ROM, a VHS video/DVD is available at extra cost. Video timings are indicated here. The letters (DP) indicate this clip is part of the interview with Professor David Punter.

Section title in the study guide	Title of video clip	Timecode
<b>Blake in his times</b>	The historical context	00:15
	Blake in the 18th century (DP)	03:35
<b>Exploring innocence and experience</b>	<i>Innocence and Experience</i> (DP)	06:20
<b>The context of Blake's work</b>	Blake's method of working/engraving (DP)	10:15
	Blake and Newton	11:50
<b>Exploring paired poems</b>	The Garden of Love (DP)	14:50
<b>The Divine Image &amp; The Human Abstract</b>	Blake's religious views (DP)	16:10
<b>The Lamb and The Tyger</b>	The Tyger (DP)	18:20
	The Tyger – Allen Ginsberg on rhythm and song	21:50
	Video/DVD includes additional readings of The Lamb and The Tyger	23:50
<b>The Chimney Sweeper (I and E)</b>	Holy Thursday and The Chimney Sweeper (DP)	25:20
<b>Nurse's Song (I and E)</b>	Nurse's Song (I and E) (DP)	29:00
<b>The Sick Rose</b>	5 visual interpretations of The Sick Rose	32:10
	The Sick Rose, The Angel et al (DP)	34:20
<b>A Poison Tree</b>	A Poison Tree – read by Dannie Abse	39:30
<b>Language, structure and form</b>	Discussing the <i>Songs</i> – Allen Ginsberg	40:25
	Language, structure and form (DP)	41:35

## 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. Teachers offering Blake for AQA A might choose to focus on contexts in more detail, whilst AQA B students might be encouraged to look most closely at AO3. However all students' reading will be enriched by some attention to both of these aspects of study. 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.
- Integrated material on the CD ROM. Throughout the text there are opportunities to make use of video material and interactive resources on the CD ROM. The activities in the study guide can be used without the CD ROM; however, it can add an extra dimension. Notes on the use of the CD ROM follow on page 7.

### 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.

# Introduction to the CD ROM

## Getting started

The CD ROM is suitable for both PCs and Mac. The CD ROM contains BLAKE INTERACTIVE a program for interactive whiteboards, and a folder of additional materials called BLAKE EXTRAS which includes word files of the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, the pdf of the whole publication, an extended interactive activity on 'Nurse's Song', *Picture Power* still image editing program and 40 London images (see page 8 for full details).

In order to be able to annotate, highlight, spotlight any of the non-interactive resources (for example, the illuminated poems), make sure that your whiteboard tools are open before opening BLAKE INTERACTIVE.

## Using the CD ROM on a PC

When you put the CD ROM disk in the computer, the program will start automatically. The opening screen will appear and after a few seconds the full list of contents will be available. This program called BLAKE INTERACTIVE is the main function of the CD ROM. To access the additional resources in the BLAKE EXTRAS folder, navigate to the 'Windows Explorer' program. This program lets you see the files on the CD ROM. To locate this programme do the following:

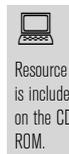
Press the 'Exit' button in the bottom right-hand corner of the program BLAKE INTERACTIVE. You will now be back in your desktop. Go to 'Start-All programs' and select 'Accessories'. From 'Accessories' choose 'Windows Explorer'. Once in 'Windows Explorer' navigate to 'My Computer' in the left hand side column and then to the Blake CD ROM icon. Click on this icon. This gives you sight of a bewildering number of files but you only need BLAKE EXTRAS. The easiest thing to do next would be to copy the whole BLAKE EXTRAS folder to your hard disk as this will allow you easily to access the extra resources that come with the CD ROM. It is about 60MBs, but copying the whole folder means that you won't ever have to go through this process again.

## Using the CD ROM on a Mac

Put the CD ROM into your CD drive. You do not need to install the CD ROM or copy it onto your hard drive. Double click on the CD ROM icon. You will see the icon for the interactive program BLAKE INTERACTIVE and a folder called BLAKE EXTRAS. To use the interactive program double click on the icon for BLAKE INTERACTIVE. To use the additional materials, the easiest thing to do would be to copy the folder BLAKE EXTRAS to your hard disk – it is about 60 MBs. You can then access the additional resources direct from your hard disk. If when you are in BLAKE INTERACTIVE you decide you want to use the BLAKE EXTRAS press 'Exit' in the bottom right-hand corner. This will take you back to your desktop.

## BLAKE INTERACTIVE

The interactive program includes interactive activities, annotated texts, resources, charts, illuminated and plain text poems, and video interviews, readings and discussions. See pages 4-5 for detailed contents of BLAKE INTERACTIVE. Activities included on the CD ROM or with related/additional resources on the CD ROM are indicated in the margins of the study guide with the following icon:



## Finding your way round 'BLAKE INTERACTIVE'

Click on the pop up 'Menu' button on any page to go directly to the following pages:

- Contents
- Section contents
- Poems A-Z
- Illuminated poems A-Z
- Complete interview with David Punter

Within sections you can use the numbers at the bottom of the screen to 'hop' from one activity to another. Use the back button to retrace your steps within and between sections.

See page 8 for example screens and more information about accessing BLAKE EXTRAS.



This is the main contents page. PC users will be taken automatically to this screen. Mac users will need to double click on the CD ROM icon then double click on BLAKE INTERACTIVE to launch the program. The titles listed on this page all correspond to the sections used in the print material.

Click on the section title you are working on (e.g. The Lamb and The Tyger) to see what activities and resources are available.



This is a menu for one of the sections (The Divine Image and The Human Abstract) in Reading Cluster 1. It lists the titles of all the activities and resources available for this section. For each section there will be between 1 and 6 pages of resources. You can access these through the Section menu or by clicking on the numbers listed along the bottom of the screen.

Click on a title to go to an activity page.



This is an activity page. Click on 'Task box' for instructions on how to use the page. Some of the pages are for use with your own interactive whiteboard tools (for example, highlighter, rollerblind, spotlight). For any activity listed as 'Interactive' on pages 7-8 you will need only the 'grabbing' tool.

When the activity is not interactive (for example, the illuminated poems, the spidergrams and charts) the plus and minus buttons will be highlighted. Click the plus button to enlarge the image. Once enlarged you will be able to grab the image and move it up and down.

## BLAKE EXTRAS

The folder BLAKE EXTRAS contains the resources listed here.

- **PICTURE POWER LONDON:** a still image editing program for use with the London images. Full details of how to use this program are in the READ ME file. We suggest you print out and read this file before starting to work with *Picture Power*. See page 66 of this study guide for brief notes.
- **LONDON IMAGES:** a folder of 40 colour JPEG images of London (as printed on pages 68-71), including 12 paintings and engravings from the 18th century is contained in the PICTURE POWER LONDON folder. These can be used to create a visual interpretation of the poem using PowerPoint or any other design program. The images can be displayed on interactive whiteboards and data projectors. You can also use the EMC's *Picture Power* program provided in the BLAKE EXTRAS folder to create a sequence of images (see page 66 for further details).
- **A-Z SONGS IN WORD:** the complete text of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* as Word files.
- **FULL PUBLICATION:** a non-printing pdf of the publication which can be displayed on an interactive whiteboard or through a data projector. You can also 'area snapshot' sections of the text using the snapshot tool in the interactive whiteboard software you are using. Once the file has been sent to your flipchart or notebook you can use all the interactive whiteboard tools as you would normally, to annotate, highlight, spotlight, conceal and reveal parts of the text.
- **NURSE'S SONG:** an interactive activity which provides students with information about the period in which Blake lived and worked and encourages them to evaluate the relevance of different types of contextual material.

# 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.



Resource and activity are included on the CD ROM.

## 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



Video clips are included on the CD ROM.

## The historical context

- Watch the video clip on the CD ROM in which the biographer Peter Ackroyd discusses Blake and the context in which he lived and worked.

## Blake in the eighteenth century – David Punter

- Watch the video clip on the CD ROM 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 11 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. <b>Benjamin Heath Malkin, 1806</b>	1
Shall I call him Artist or Genius – or Mystic – or Madman? Probably he is all ... <b>Henry Crabb Robinson, 1825</b>	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. <b>J.J. Garth Wilkinson, 1839</b>	3
They seemed to sound like nonsense verses as we read them aloud ... others have a real charm in their wildness and oddness. <b>Edward Quillian, 1848</b>	4
Blake's poetry has the unpleasantness of great poetry. <b>T.S. Eliot, 1922</b>	5
I think it is Blake's childlikeness that always subjects his genius to being put in its place by the grown-up world. <b>Joseph Wickstead, 1928</b>	6
Blake was the poet of eternity, but he was also the poet of late eighteenth-century London. <b>Peter Ackroyd, 1995</b>	7
The unnerving directness of his lyrics. <b>Andrew Motion, 2000</b>	8
Blake is a great radical, dissenting, one-nation poet. <b>Tom Paulin, 2000</b>	9
Compelled to shock and provoke. <b>Matthew Collings, 2000</b>	10
A great painter, poet, visionary. <b>Matthew Collings, 2000</b>	11
Blake was against anything anyone else thought. <b>Matthew Collings, 2000</b>	12
He lived through the rise of industrialisation, commercialisation and rationalism. He was against all three. <b>Matthew Collings, 2000</b>	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. <b>Matthew Collings, 2000</b>	14
A combination of extremes. His vision of civilisation as inevitably chaotic and contradictory mirrors the political turmoil of his age. <b>BBC, 2004</b>	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.



A copy of the poem for annotating is included on the CD ROM.

### 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 14. 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.

## Annotating the poem – an example

A simple lullaby, no more than that?

Entirely monosyllabic words - child-like simplicity linked to the subject of the baby.

Speech marks indicate two different voices - mother and child, or poet (bard) and child?

Lack of concrete nouns - abstract noun 'joy' repeated.

Repetition of the words 'joy' and 'sweet' more often than one might expect in a conventional poem.

'Smile' and 'sing' are paralleled - the two are linked. This shows the importance of song in the development of the joyful child, and in human life in general.

The protective, nurturing role of the mother.

The mother (or poet?) sings - link with the idea of *Songs of Innocence* and of *Experience*.

Why is a two-day-old child represented as speaking?

The idea of naming - is this the start of the process of constraint?

A lullaby from mother to child but in this case the child speaks as well - equality in the relationship established right from the start.

Use of voices is unusual - disorientating for the reader not to know who is speaking. This disorientation clashes with the seeming simplicity.

A question that is almost immediately answered - creates a sense of certainty, security.

Saying 'Sweet joy befall thee!' could imply the opposite, that there's a risk of sorrow. 'Befall' sounds negative - slight sense of threat.

Ends on 'thee', suggesting the importance of the infant.

Ending each stanza with the refrain emphasises its importance.

The ambiguity means it could be read in different ways. Is the child a free spirit, not yet restricted by parental restraint? Or is this the expression of ideal maternal love?

**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.

Is it about the poet seeing innocence (in the newborn child) and wishing it to continue?



The illuminated poem and activity are included on the CD ROM.

## Exploring illuminations – Infant Joy

'Infant Joy' is a poem you have already looked at (pages 12-14). It is included below in the form in which it was first published, as part of an illuminated engraving.

- In pairs, try annotating the engraved plate with your ideas about what this illumination suggests. When you've finished, look at one reader's annotations, included on page 30.
- Read the poem again and, in pairs, talk about the way in which the ideas explored in the poem are reflected in the illumination.
- Take it in turns to feed back your ideas to the rest of the class.



## An annotated illumination – Infant Joy



The annotated illumination is included on the CD ROM.

Putting a family in a flower emphasises the symbolic nature of the poem – not realism.

Convention of the nurturing mother.

Possibly draws on the conventional symbolism of the Virgin mother, with the mother dressed in blue.

Angel – conventional protective figure.

Human figures seen as part of nature ('Everything that lives is Holy').



Faces are focused on the baby – the baby is the centre of this world.

A drooping flower – the threat of decay is present even in the midst of a happy scene of a blossoming flower.

Poem contained in flower – part of Nature. Both part of a bigger creation (as is baby?).

Tendrils not threatening here, but they recall imprisoning tendrils of fairy tales – are there sinister undertones?

Enclosed in a comforting world. Does this mean there is something to be protected from? Possible that this might in time become stifling?