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Time

Percy Bysshe Shelley



Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- speak confidently in a wide range of contexts, for example, to fulfil different purposes.
- examine the central idea of an informational text and analyse its development over the course of text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.
- use summary skills to extract salient points and develop a mind map.
- examine the mechanics of precis writing and practice giving a precis of a text.
- demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing in different varieties of texts.
- observe hyphenation conventions.
- use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
- use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
- establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).



Pre-reading

- What images or feelings come to mind when you think about time?
- How do you think poets can convey the idea of time?

Unfathomable Sea! whose waves are years,
Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep **woe**
Are **brackish** with the salt of human tears!
Thou **shoreless** flood, which in thy **ebb** and flow
Claspest the limits of mortality!

And sick of prey, yet **howling** on for more,
Vomitest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore;
Treacherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
Who shall put forth on thee,
Unfathomable Sea?

What do these lines suggest about the nature of the sea?



Theme

In this short but powerful poem, Shelley personifies time as an ocean, vast and dangerous; filled with sufferings and human losses. It's a vivid metaphor for the relentless passage of time, and the destruction it brings. The tone is dark and awe-filled, typical of Shelley's Romantic style.

About the Poet

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) was an influential English Romantic poet known for his radical ideas and lyrical poetry. His works often explored themes of nature, politics, and the power of imagination. Some of his most famous poems include "*Ozymandias*," "*To a Skylark*," and "*Prometheus Unbound*." Shelley's life was marked by controversy, as he was often critical of societal norms and institutions. His works continue to be celebrated for their lyrical beauty and philosophical depth.



Glossary

Words	Meanings
brackish	containing both salt and fresh water; somewhat salty
claspest	to hold tightly, embrace, or encircle
ebb	the outward flow of the tide; a decline or decrease
howling	making a loud, mournful cry or sound
shoreless	without a shore; having no boundary or end
treacherous	dangerous or deceitful
unfathomable	impossible to understand or measure
vomitest	to disgorge or throw up, often in a forceful manner
woe	great sorrow or distress



Reading and Critical Thinking

A Answer the following questions:

- 1 What does the "unfathomable sea" symbolize in the poem?
- 2 What words or phrases show time's power over human lives?
- 3 How does the image "shoreless" contribute to the overall meaning of the poem?
- 4 How is mortality connected to the "ebb and flow" of time?
- 5 What is the tone of the poem? How does Shelley use language to create this tone?
- 6 How does Shelley personify time in the poem?
- 7 Why does Shelley use the word "brackish" to describe the waters of time?
- 8 What role does the "howling" of time play in the poem?
- 9 What does the final line suggest about humanity's relationship with time?
- 10 What might Shelley be trying to convey through this question?

For the
teacher

- Encourage the students to reflect on how the poem's structure contributes to its meaning.

B Choose the correct option.

- 1 What metaphor does Shelley use to describe time in the poem?
 - a. river
 - b. unfathomable sea
 - c. mountain
 - d. endless sky
- 2 In the poem, the "shoreless flood" symbolizes:
 - a. the end of life
 - b. the unpredictable nature of time
 - c. the calmness of time
 - d. the boundaries of time
- 3 What emotion is most strongly conveyed by the word "brackish" in the context of the poem?
 - a. joy
 - b. grief
 - c. indifference
 - d. hope
- 4 The "howling" of time in the poem suggests:
 - a. the joy of passing moments
 - b. the calmness of eternity
 - c. the destructive and relentless nature of time
 - d. the beauty of the present
- 5 What does the word "treacherous" imply about time in the poem?
 - a. Time is steady and reliable.
 - b. Time is dangerous and deceptive.
 - c. Time is comforting and gentle.
 - d. Time is forgiving.

Examine the Central Idea means to identify the main message or theme that the author conveys in an informational text. Analyzing its development involves looking at how the author introduces, builds upon, and supports the central idea with details, examples, and explanations throughout the text.

If "*Time*" by Percy Bysshe Shelley were studied as an informational text about the nature of time, the central idea could be that *time is a powerful, uncontrollable force that affects all of humanity*. This idea is developed through metaphorical language (e.g., "unfathomable sea," "shoreless flood"), personification

("howling," "vomitest thy wrecks"), and powerful imagery to show time's impact on human life and mortality.

C How does Shelley develop the central idea of time's power and unpredictability throughout the poem, and what supporting images or metaphors does he use to communicate this message clearly?

Using summary skills involves identifying and extracting the salient points—the most important ideas—from a text. A mind map is a visual tool that helps organize these ideas in a structured and interconnected way, showing how main ideas and supporting details relate. This skill enhances comprehension, memory, and critical thinking.

D Can you create a mind map summarizing the key ideas and images in Shelley's poem "*Time*"? What does your mind map reveal about the poem's message on the nature of time and human experience?

Summary of the Poem "*Time*"

In "*Time*," Percy Bysshe Shelley portrays time as a vast, powerful, and uncontrollable force through the metaphor of an "unfathomable sea." The poem emphasizes time's destructive nature, describing it as treacherous, relentless, and filled with sorrow. Shelley uses vivid imagery and personification to depict time not just as a measure, but as a living, howling entity that consumes all in its path. The tone is reflective and dark, revealing humanity's helplessness against the unstoppable flow of time and the inevitable reality of mortality.

Mechanics of Precis Writing: Precis writing is the skill of summarizing a passage or poem concisely and clearly while retaining its essential ideas and tone. A precis is much shorter than the original text and written in your own words. It excludes unnecessary details, examples, and figurative language while capturing the core message.

E Write a precis of the poem *Time* by Percy Bysshe Shelley in 2–3 sentences, focusing on its central metaphor and overall message.

For the teacher

Encourage the students to identify the main idea and key supporting details, then restate them concisely in their own words without personal opinions, this will be the summary of the poem.



Vocabulary and Grammar

Capitalization: Using capital letters appropriately, such as for the first word of a sentence, proper nouns (names of people, places), days of the week, months, titles, and the pronoun "I."

Example: *Time waits for no one.* (Note how "Time" is capitalized as it's the first word of the sentence.)

Punctuation: The use of marks like periods (.), commas (,), exclamation points (!), question marks (?), quotation marks (" "), and others to clarify meaning in writing.

Example: *Do you know what time it is?*

Time's a bird, she says, who flies too fast, don't blink, you'll miss her passing.
(The dash adds dramatic pause; commas and line breaks help pace the poem.)

Spelling: The correct arrangement of letters in words.

Example: *Tomorrow is Wednesday.*

A Write a short paragraph (4–5 lines) describing what "time" means to you. Use correct capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.



Oral Communication Skills

Speaking Confidently and Fluently in Various Contexts: Speaking confidently and fluently means expressing your ideas clearly, articulating your thoughts with ease, and engaging your audience in different situations. This skill is essential in contexts such as conflict resolution, panel discussions, or dialogues, where the purpose could be to inform (exposition), persuade (argumentation), or entertain.

Example: In a panel discussion about Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Time," participants could confidently discuss how the poem represents time as an inevitable and uncontrollable force. One might argue that the "unfathomable sea" metaphor suggests time's vast and mysterious power over human lives, while another panelist may explain how the poem's tone of inevitability reflects human mortality. By speaking clearly and confidently, the participants would enhance the discussion and communicate their insights effectively.

A Discussion Time, arrange a discussion in the class on the following question:

"Do you think Shelley's portrayal of time as a destructive and uncontrollable force reflects how most people experience time in real life? Why or why not?"

Hyphenation Conventions: A hyphen (-) is a punctuation mark used to join words or to split a word at the end of a line. It helps avoid confusion and creates compound words with clear meaning.

Examples:

- **Compound adjectives before nouns:**
She has a well-known voice. (The hyphen joins "well" and "known" to describe "voice.")
- **Joining numbers and words:**
A twenty-minute break. (Without the hyphen, it could be confusing.)

B

Can you identify or rewrite a line from *Time* using a hyphenated compound adjective? For example, could "fast flying bird" be written as "fast-flying bird"? What effect does this change have?



Writing Skills

Transitions are words or phrases that help connect ideas smoothly across sentences and paragraphs (e.g., *however, therefore, in addition, as a result, meanwhile*).

Syntax is the arrangement of words and phrases to form sentences. Varying syntax (using different sentence structures) helps maintain reader interest and clarify complex ideas.

Together, these tools help a writer create cohesion, meaning the text flows logically and ideas are clearly linked.

Example: Let's imagine you're writing a paragraph analyzing the poem *Time*.

Without transitions or varied syntax: Time is compared to a bird. Time is fast. The poet uses metaphors. The tone changes at the end.

With transitions and varied syntax: In the poem *Time*, the poet compares time to a bird to emphasize its fleeting nature. As a result, the reader senses that time is something difficult to hold onto. Furthermore, the poet's use of metaphors deepens the emotional impact. By the end of the poem, the tone shifts, reminding us of time's unstoppable force.

Notice how transitions like "As a result", "Furthermore" and "By the end of the poem" connect ideas clearly. Also, the sentence structures vary; some are short, some are compound or complex.

A

Choose two lines or ideas from *Time*. Write a short paragraph connecting them using at least two transitions and two different sentence structures.

Precise language means using clear, specific, and accurate words to express your ideas.

Domain-specific vocabulary refers to words related to a particular subject area or field e.g., “chronological,” “duration,” or “fleeting” when discussing time.

Moreover, metaphor, simile, and analogy are figurative language techniques used to explain complex ideas in creative ways:

Metaphor: saying something *is* something else e.g., *Time is a thief.*

Simile: comparing two things using *like* or *as* e.g., *Time is like a river.*

Analogy: an extended comparison to explain an idea e.g., *Time is like sand slipping through fingers and you can never hold onto it.*

B

What metaphor does the poet use in the poem *Time* to describe time? How does this help you understand the poem's message?

C

A. Write your own metaphor or simile to describe how time feels during exams or on your birthday.

A **formal style** means writing in a clear, professional, and academic way; no slang, no contractions, and no overly casual language.

An **objective tone** means staying neutral and unbiased, focusing on facts and evidence instead of personal opinions or emotions.

Norms and conventions of the discipline refer to the expectations of academic writing in English Literature such as using textual evidence, analyzing literary devices, and supporting claims logically.

A **concluding statement** is the final part of a written response.

D

What are two features of formal style you should remember when writing an essay about a poem?

E

Why is it important to keep an objective tone when analyzing literature? How does it help your reader trust your interpretation?