

6 UNIT

The Echoing Green

William Blake (1757 – 1827)



Learning Outcomes:

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

- demonstrate attentive listening skills while working in groups and taking turns to speak with standard pronunciation and intonation.
- use pre-reading and while-reading strategies to analyse and explore different layers of meaning within texts including biases and opinions.
- verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
- demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- analyse nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.
- apply knowledge of parts of speech, tenses, sentence structure and other features of grammar and vocabulary to understand how language functions in different contexts and make effective choices for meaning or style while reading, listening and writing.
- use paraphrasing skills to paraphrase a poem.

Pre-reading:

- What images or feelings come to your mind when you think of a green field or a park?
- How important are green spaces (parks, gardens, countryside) for people's happiness and well-being?

About the poet

William Blake (1757-1827) was an English poet and painter, known for his unique and visionary work. He wrote "The Echoing Green," a poem that reflects themes of innocence, nature, and the cycles of life. In this poem, he expresses the joy and innocence of children's early life experiences and appreciates nature in simple words. Blake often combined his poetry with illustrations, creating a blend of visual and literary art.

The sun does arise,
And make happy the skies.
The **merry** bells ring
To welcome the Spring.
The sky-lark and **thrush**,
The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around,
To the bells' **cheerful** sound.
While our sports shall be seen
On the Echoing Green.

While-reading

What images of nature and community life do you notice?

Old John, with white hair
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old **folk**,
They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say.
'Such, such were the joys.
When we all girls & boys,
In our **youth**-time were seen,
On the Echoing Green.'

While-reading

How might these scenes be different if the environment were affected by problems like global warming and deforestation?

Till the little ones **weary**
No more can be merry
The sun does **descend**,
And our sports have an end:
Round the laps of their mothers,
Many sisters and brothers,
Like birds in their nest,
Are ready for rest;
And sport no more seen,
On the darkening Green.

While-reading

How do the images of the elders reflect the themes of age and the passage of time?



For the Teacher:

- While exploring 'The Echoing Green' by William Blake, encourage students to reflect on how the poem's imagery of joyful children playing under flourishing trees in a vibrant natural setting contrasts with today's environmental challenges.
- Discuss how the "echoing green" symbolises a healthy, thriving environment — and prompt students to consider how global warming, deforestation, and pollution are putting such natural beauty at risk.
- Extend the activity by asking students to compose their own modern version of The Echoing Green, either celebrating environmental protection or warning of the consequences of neglecting our planet.

Central Idea of the Poem:

The central idea of William Blake's poem "The Echoing Green" is the joyful and harmonious relationship between nature and human life. The poem celebrates the happiness of children playing and the wisdom of the elderly, all within the peaceful setting of a green field. The progression of the day is reflected through the cycle of life. The passage of time is symbolized in the bright morning which is giving way to a calm evening.

Glossary:

Words	Meanings
cheerful	happy, and showing it by the way that you behave
descend	to slope downwards
folk	people in general
merry	happy and cheerful
thrush	a bird with a brown back and brown spots on its chest
weary	very tired, especially after you have been working hard or doing something for a long time
youth	the time of life when a person is young, especially the time before a child becomes an adult

Reading and Critical Thinking

A. Answer the following questions:

1. What activities are taking place on the echoing green?
2. How does Blake portray the relationship between nature and human life in the poem?
3. What role do the 'old folk' play in the scene described? How does their presence add to the poem's meaning?
4. What is the significance of the shift from lively activity to quietness as the poem progresses?
5. How might the 'echoing' of the green symbolise memory or continuity between generations?
6. How does the imagery in the poem contribute to the tone and mood of the scene depicted?
7. In what ways does the poem reflect the themes of innocence and the passage of time?
8. How might the poem be interpreted as a reflection on the cycles of life and the natural world?

Vocabulary and Grammar

A. Choose three new words from "The Echoing Green" that were unfamiliar to you. For each word, provide the following information:

1. Word:

- **Definition:** _____
- **Sentence:** _____

2. Word:

- **Definition:** _____
- **Sentence:** _____

3. Word:

- **Definition:** _____
- **Sentence:** _____

B. Compare the meanings of the words used in the poem. Write down the different connotations that each word carries.

1. Words: "Merry" vs. "Joyful"

- **Merry:** _____
- **Joyful:** _____

2. Words: "Weary" vs. "Tired"

- **Weary:** _____
- **Tired:** _____

3. Words: "Echoing" vs. "Resounding"

- **Echoing:** _____
- **Resounding:** _____

Figurative Language and Literary Devices

- Identify and explain an example of personification in the poem. How does it contribute to the overall mood?
- Blake uses imagery extensively. Choose two vivid images from the poem and explain their effect on the reader.
- How is symbolism used in the poem? What might 'the green' symbolise beyond its literal meaning?
- What is the effect of the simple, song-like structure and rhyme scheme on the tone of the poem?

- Find an example of alliteration in the poem. How does it enhance the musical quality of the lines?

Identifying Parts of Speech, Tenses, and Sentence Structures in Poetry

In poetry, identifying parts of speech, tenses, and sentence structures involves recognising and analysing the components of language used within the poem. This includes parts of speech (such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.), verb tenses (past, present, future), and sentence structures (simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex).

C. Identify and label the bold word in each sentence as a specific part of speech (e.g. noun, verb, adjective, adverb, conjunction, preposition, pronoun, interjection).

1. The sky **echoed** with laughter and delight. _____
2. Old John watched the children play from his seat **beneath** the tree. _____
3. Their laughter was **infectious**, spreading joy across the field. _____
4. **Although** the sun began to set, the children were reluctant to leave. _____

D. Identify the verb tense in each sentence. Then rewrite the sentence in a different tense as indicated.

1. *The children play on the echoing green.*
 - Tense: _____
 - Rewrite in past perfect: _____
2. *Birds sing joyfully as the sun rises.*



For the Teacher:

- **Encourage recognition of nuances:** Guide students to notice subtle shifts in the poem's imagery, tone, and symbolism that add depth to its meaning.
- **Blake's figurative language isn't just decorative:** Emphasise that Blake's use of figurative language (personification, imagery, symbolism, etc.) enhances the poem's emotional impact and contributes to the themes.
- **Explore how devices work together:** Have students explore how different figurative devices (like personification and imagery) work in harmony to evoke feelings of innocence, nostalgia, and the passage of time.
- **Nuances within the imagery of youth and age:** Help students identify the subtle contrasts between the imagery of youth (playfulness, light) and age (rest, quietness), showing the balance Blake creates between these themes.
- **Appreciation of emotional and thematic complexity:** Guide students to recognise the layered emotional experience created by these nuances, which enrich their understanding of the poem's themes, such as the cycle of life.

- Tense: _____
- Rewrite in future continuous: _____

E. Examine each sentence and state whether it is simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex. Briefly justify your choice.

1. The green is alive with laughter, and the trees echo every sound.
Type: _____ | Justification: _____
2. When the sun sets, the children return home, but the memory lingers.
Type: _____ | Justification: _____
3. The old folk, smiling softly, remember their own youth.
Type: _____ | Justification: _____

F. How does the use of the present tense in the following lines contribute to the timeless and universal theme of the poem? How does the choice of tense affect the reader's perception of the events described?

*The sun does arise,
And make happy the skies;*

G. In the following lines, what role do the adjectives 'merry' and 'welcome' play in shaping the mood of the poem? How would the meaning change if these adjectives were replaced with different ones?

*The merry bells ring
To welcome the Spring.*

H. The poem contains several simple, parallel sentence structures. How does this repetition and simplicity in sentence construction mirror the themes of innocence and the cyclical nature of life? How does it impact the overall rhythm and flow of the poem?

Oral Communication

1. Group Discussion

- In groups, discuss 'The Echoing Green' and focus on the figurative language, themes, and imagery used in the poem. Take turns speaking, ensuring that everyone contributes to the discussion.
- While discussing, listen attentively to each other and ask follow-up questions. For example:
 - What do you think the green symbolises?
 - How does Blake's use of personification affect the mood of the poem?
 - Can you think of any examples of imagery that stood out to you?

2. Class Presentations

- After group discussion, one person from each group will share your key points with the class. Speak clearly with proper pronunciation and intonation to express your ideas effectively.

Writing Skills

Reference to Context

- This involves explaining the meaning of specific lines or parts of the poem in relation to the overall themes, tone, or message of the poem.
- The focus is on interpreting why the poet uses certain words or images and how they contribute to the poem's meaning.

Paraphrasing

- Paraphrasing means rewriting a passage in simpler or clearer words while keeping the original meaning intact.
- The goal is to restate the text in a way that shows understanding of its literal meaning.

Example:

*The sun does arise,
And make happy the skies;*

Reference to the Context: In the poem *The Echoing Green* by William Blake, these lines signify the beginning of a new day, symbolising renewal, hope, and the start of a fresh cycle. The rising sun brings light and happiness, creating a positive and uplifting atmosphere. This contributes to the joyful and carefree mood of the poem, where nature, especially the sky, is portrayed as lively and vibrant. The imagery of the sun making 'happy the skies' enhances the overall tone of innocence and joy in the poem.

Paraphrase: The sun rises and brightens the sky, creating a cheerful atmosphere.

- A. Paraphrase the first stanza of the poem. Then, provide a reference to the context of the paraphrased lines in relation to the themes or mood of the poem.**