

Brief Question in W. H. Auden's Poems

Writer: W. H. Auden | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

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- **Who was W. H. Auden?**

Ans:

A leading English poet of the 20th century.

- **What jobs did Auden do in America?**

Ans:

He taught at several schools and universities.

- **How was Auden honoured in England?**

Ans:

He received the King's Gold Medal in 1937.

- **When was Auden awarded the Pulitzer Prize?**

Ans:

In 1948 for The Age of Anxiety.

- **When was the poem "Lullaby" published?**

Ans:

It was first published in 1937.

- **What is the theme of "Lullaby"?**

Ans:

Love despite human faults and faithlessness.

- **Why does the poet-lover call his beloved "human"?**

Ans:

She is mortal, imperfect, and not a goddess.

- **What proves the child to be ephemeral?**

Ans:

The grave shows life is brief.

- **What does “the living creature” refer to?**

Ans:

It refers to the poet’s beloved.

- **Who is Venus?**

Ans

: The Roman goddess of love and beauty.

- **What is “supernatural sympathy”?**

Ans:

Venus’s blessing raising love to mystic height.

- **How do the lovers resemble hermits?**

Ans:

Both seek union and spiritual ecstasy.

- **What is the meaning of “Noons of dryness”?**

Ans:

Moments of spiritual crisis and misery.

- **What does the poet mean by “human love”?**

Ans:

Universal love, or agape, for all.

- **What does “Nights of insult” refer to?**

Ans:

Despair after mere physical gratification.

- **How does Auden show the permanence of art?**

Ans:

Yeats died; his poems still live.

- **How does Auden picture Yeats's death?**

Ans:

Mind faded; feelings stilled; life ebbed.

- **How does Auden satirize materialistic outlook?**

Ans:

Brokers roar for profit in noisy markets.

- **What is people's illusion about their freedom?**

Ans:

They feel free within ego and vanity.

- **What is "the parish of rich women"?**

Ans:

Yeats's flattering circle of lady admirers.

- **How does Auden estimate Ireland?**

Ans:

Poetry changed nothing in Ireland's conditions.

- **What is "intellectual disgrace"?**

Ans:

Hatred bred by clashing ideologies.

- **How may Yeats's poetry help in crisis?**

Ans:

Bring light and joy to suffering minds.

- **Who was Achilles?**

Ans:

Greek hero, central to the Iliad.

- **What battlefield picture does Thetis see?**

Ans:

Dreary ranks of soldiers awaiting orders.

- **What is the meaning of “a voice without a face”?**

Ans

: Dictators speaking by radio or loudspeaker.

- **What does “the shining metal” mean?**

Ans:

The shield as art and human image.

- **What do the “three pale figures” symbolize?**

Ans:

Prisoners of war bound to stakes.

- **What does a “weed-choked field” symbolize?**

Ans:

Modern spiritual desolation and barrenness.

- **Why did Hephaestus hobble away?**

Ans:

Lame, displeased with his finished work.

- **What moral comes from “The Shield of Achilles”?**

Ans:

War’s evils spare no one, not even heroes.

- **What kind of poem is “Petition”?**

Ans:

A brief sonnet of prayer to God.

- **What is the theme of “Petition”?**

Ans:

Diagnose modern ills; ask divine cure.

- **Which modern diseases need “sovereign touch”?**

Ans:

Neurosis, breakdown, repressed desire, maladjustment.

- **How is social change possible, according to Auden?**

Ans:

By inner transformation, a changed heart.

- **Who are the “old Masters”?**

Ans:

Ancient tragedians and great painters like Brueghel.

- **What is the “miraculous birth”?**

Ans:

Christ’s Resurrection foretold in Scripture.

- **What is “Brueghel’s Icarus”?**

Ans:

A landscape showing Icarus falling unnoticed.

- **What is the theme of “Musée des Beaux Arts”?**

Ans:

Human indifference to others’ suffering.

- **Who are “the inconstant ones”?**

Ans:

People who change views to please power.

- **Why are the limestone men “unable to conceive a god”?**

Ans:

They think God lacks moral sense.

- **What is the “nomad’s comb”?**

Ans:

A hair fringe shading a desert gaze.

- **Who are “the best” and “the worst”?**

Ans:

Saints are best; Caesars are worst.

- **What do the “granite wastes” symbolize?**

Ans:

Hard, saintly natures forming future saints.

- **What do the “clays and gravels” symbolize?**

Ans:

Malleable people and fruitful environments.

- **What is an “anti-mythological myth”?**

Ans:

A myth made from real human life.

- **What lesson is in “In Praise of Limestone”?**

Ans:

Face reality; avoid dreamy escapes.

- **What does the title “Lullaby” signify?**

Ans:

A soothing song to lull a lover.

- **Whom does Achilles refer to?**

Ans:

The modern man amid cruel times.

- **What is Auden's message in "Lullaby"?**

Ans:

Change eros into agape for humanity.

- **Who "die morally," according to Auden?**

Ans:

Cowards who tolerate tyrants' cruelties.

- **What is Auden's message in "Lullaby"?**

Ans:

Transform passion into universal charity.

- **Who is the mother of Achilles?**

Ans:

The sea-nymph Thetis.

- **What is the source of the title "Out, Out—"?**

Ans:

Macbeth's line: "Out, out, brief candle!"

- **Why does Auden call the lover faithless?**

Ans:

Humans are imperfect and inconstant.

- **What does the title "The Shield of Achilles" signify?**

Ans:

The shield as art and modern condition.

- **How is modern man a prisoner of society?**

Ans:

Systems oppress him and limit freedom.

- **Who is the “She” in “The Shield of Achilles”?**

Ans:

Thetis; also the expectant reading public.

LxNotes