

Write a summary of the poem "When You Are Old".

Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Write a summary of the poem "When You Are Old".

In this poem, William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) speaks to someone he loves. He imagines what they will be like when they are old. He describes how they will be grey, tired, and sleepy, sitting by the fire. He tells them to take down a book and read it slowly. While reading, they should think about the past. They should remember how their eyes once had a special look and how many people loved their beauty.

Yeats explains that many people may have loved the person's beauty, but only one person truly loved their inner soul. This person loved the sadness and changes in their face as they grew older. The poet then imagines the person sitting by the fire, feeling a little sad. They would remember how love left and went far away, up into the mountains, and then disappeared among the stars.

The poem is about deep, lasting love. Yeats shows how love for someone's inner self is more important than just their outward beauty. It speaks of how true love sees beyond physical appearance and remains even as a person grows old and changes.

This is a poem of love, memories, and loss. It encourages the reader to think about what really matters in love. The poet reminds us that true love is about the soul, not just the body. The phrase **"dream of the soft look your eyes had once"** talks about how the physical features change with time. The word "once" emphasizes that this look belongs to a time that is gone. The line "And of their shadows deep" refers to how the changes in the face are deeper and more permanent over time.

Finally, **"And Love fled"** and **"paced upon the mountains overhead"** show how love, too, fades with time. Time is seen as a force that takes things away and changes everything. In this poem, Yeats uses simple phrases to tell us about the beauty and sadness of time's impact on life.