

Felix Randal Key Info

Writer: Gerard Manley Hopkins | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Key Facts

- **Author:** Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)
- **Title of the Author:** English poet and Jesuit priest.
- **Full Title:** Felix Randal
- **Total Lines:** 14 lines
- **Stanzas:** 1 stanza (a single block of 14 lines)
- **Genre:** Poetry (Religious/Reflective Elegy)
- **Published Date:** 1918 (posthumously)
- **Written Date:** 1880
- **Form:** Petrarchan (Italian) Sonnet
- **Meter:** Sprung rhythm (a Hopkins innovation)
- **Rhyme Scheme:** ABBAABBA CCDCCD
- **Tone:** Reflective, compassionate, spiritual
- **Point of View:** First-person (the speaker is the priest)
- **Setting:** Sickroom or deathbed, and the speaker's memory
- **Time Setting:** The final days of Felix Randal's life
- **Place Setting:** Likely a quiet parish or community hospital/room

Key Notes

- **Form and Structure of the Poem:** This poem is a sonnet. A sonnet is a poem with 14 lines. This sonnet is divided into two parts: Octave (first 8 lines), Sestet (last 6 lines). In this poem, Hopkins presents the life, illness, death, and spiritual peace of an ordinary blacksmith named Felix Randal. The octave describes Felix's physical condition during his illness. While the sestet expresses the spiritual transformation and the feelings of the priest (speaker) who stayed by his side.

- **Felix Randal:** Felix Randal is a religious elegy filled with deep emotion. In this poem, Hopkins, as a priest, shows his sympathy and compassion toward a dying man named Felix Randal. Felix was once a strong and hardworking blacksmith. But later, he fell ill and became weak. Before death, he took spiritual refuge through faith. The poet, as a priest, was beside him till the end. This poem reflects themes of compassion, faith, death, and the peace of the soul—creating a deep spiritual atmosphere.

The background of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem Felix Randal is deeply rooted in religious and humanistic emotions. Hopkins was a priest and a Jesuit father who used to serve the sick and the dying. He wrote this poem about a man who, at the end of his life, turned to religion for spiritual comfort. During the Victorian era, when science and reason were gradually challenging religious beliefs, Hopkins reflected on faith, compassion, and the salvation of the soul.

Felix Randal was a blacksmith—once strong and hardworking—who gradually fell ill and came close to death. As a priest, Hopkins stood by him and witnessed his spiritual transformation. This poem is not just the story of a sick man, but through the eyes of a priest, it deeply portrays how humanity, faith, compassion, and divine grace work in the final moments of life. It reflects Hopkins' personal religious experiences and his thoughts on the inner spiritual world of humans.