

"Ode on Melancholy" Summary

Writer: John Keats | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Main Message of the Poem: "Ode on Melancholy" is a remarkable poem by British Romantic poet John Keats. It is one of his five famous odes and was published in 1820. In this poem, Keats talks about how to live with melancholy (deep sadness). According to the poet, during times of sorrow, one should not break down but rather become one with that sorrow.

What Not to Do in Times of Sadness: In the first stanza, the poet explains what should not be done during sorrow. Even if someone is deeply suffering, they should never drink from the river Lethe (the River of Forgetfulness). Drinking from Lethe makes people forget everything. Even after facing great pain, one must not think of suicide or anything related to death, because that would numb the pain of the soul. Instead, the sufferer must remain aware of the depth of their sorrow.

What to Do in Times of Sadness: In the second stanza, the poet discusses what one can do during sorrow. If someone is in deep pain, they should surround their sorrow with natural beauty. A sad person can look at roses or rainbows to lift their spirits. If a beloved is angry, the poet suggests holding her soft hands and gazing into her eyes.

The Link Between Sorrow and Joy: In the third stanza, the poet says that sorrow and joy are connected. Beauty will eventually fade, and joy is always short-lived. Just as only poison remains in a flower after the bee has taken the honey, sorrow remains after joy is gone. So we should experience both joy and sorrow together. Without sorrow, one cannot truly feel real joy.