

Pied Beauty 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:** Pied Beauty
- **Total Lines:** 11 lines
- **Stanza:** 1 stanza (called a curtal sonnet)
- **Genre:** Poetry (Religious / Nature poem)
- **Published Date:** 1918 (posthumously)
- **Written Date:** 1877
- **Form:** Curtal Sonnet (shortened sonnet form by Hopkins)
- **Meter:** Sprung Rhythm (Hopkins' own style)
- **Rhyme Scheme:** ABCABC DBCDC
- **Tone:** Thankful, joyful, and admiring
- **Point of View:** First-person (the poet praises God)
- **Setting:** The natural world with variety and color
- **Time Setting:** Timeless – focuses on beauty in nature
- **Place Setting:** Nature – sky, land, animals, everyday life

Key Notes

- **Form and Structure of the Poem:** "Pied Beauty" is a short hymn-like or praise-focused poem. It is a Curtal Sonnet of only 11 lines, a form invented by Hopkins himself. The poem is written in Hopkins' unique Sprung Rhythm meter.
- **Curtal Sonnet:** Hopkins created a special form called the Curtal Sonnet, which is a shortened version of a traditional 14-line sonnet. In this form, the first 8 lines (octave) are reduced to 6 lines. The last 6 lines (sestet) are reduced to 4½ lines. The final half-line is

known as the “tail piece.” So, total line count: $6 + 4\frac{1}{2} = 10\frac{1}{2}$ lines. But in printed versions, it may look like 11 lines depending on formatting.

Background:

Gerard Manley Hopkins’ poem “Pied Beauty” is rooted in religious consciousness, the diversity of nature, and the praise of God’s creative power. Hopkins was a Jesuit priest and a deeply religious man who believed that God’s beauty is reflected in every created thing—even if those things are irregular, strange, or imperfect.

This poem was written at a time when art and literature were gradually beginning to view nature through the lens of science and reason. But Hopkins perceived God’s glory in the colors, variety, cracks, and irregularities—all things “dappled”—of nature. In this poem, he praises every unique and different feature of the natural world.

Hopkins’ own philosophical concepts of “inscape” and “instress” are especially evident in this poem. **Inscape:** The unique structure and individuality of each object. **Instress:** The perception of God’s power and presence in that unique structure or individuality. “Pied Beauty” is essentially a religious hymn, in which the poet praises God’s creation that may appear chaotic or mottled to the ordinary eye but is full of divine beauty.