

Spring and Fall Summary

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Child's Sorrow and the Change of Nature: In this part, the poet speaks to a little girl named Margaret. Margaret cries as she watches the leaves fall in autumn. She cannot understand why the colorful, beautiful leaves are falling to the ground. The poet gently tells her that her sadness is not only for the leaves. The change in nature is making her sad because, unknowingly, she is feeling the deeper truth of life and the hint of death. In childhood, we feel sorrow. That sorrow is as deep as that of adults, though we do not fully understand it then. The poet shows that a child's first feeling of grief often comes through observing the changes in nature. This sorrow is actually a reflection of the greater sorrow of life—death.

Sense of Death and Self-Realization: In this part, the poet says that Margaret's sorrow is, in fact, a feeling of her own mortality. She does not understand it now, but one day she will—just like the falling leaves, human life also comes to an end. The decay in nature gives her a subtle message of her own death. The poet says that human sorrow does not always come from external causes; often, it arises from thinking about one's own existence, decay, and death. Margaret's unknown grief is actually a reflection of the inborn awareness of death in all humans. Here, the poet speaks of awakening spiritual understanding in life. He makes it clear that this sorrow is an eternal truth of human life—life is short, but this realization is what truly makes us human.