

The Second Coming Key Facts

Writer: William Butler Yeats | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Key Facts

- **Full Title:** The Second Coming
- **Author:** William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)
- **Title of the Author:** The Last Romantic Poet & Irish National Poet
- **Prize:** Nobel Prize in Literature (1923)
- **Source:** Inspired by the aftermath of World War I, the Russian Revolution, and Yeats's belief in historical cycles based on his mystical theory of the gyres
- **Written Time:** January 1919 (shortly after WWI and during political turmoil in Europe)
- **First Published:** 1920, in the journal The Dial
- **Later Published In:** The poetry collection The Tower (1928)
- **Publisher:** The Dial (first), then Macmillan in The Tower
- **Genre:** Modernist Poem, Prophetic Poem
- **Form:** Lyric poem in two stanzas (first stanza: 8 lines, second stanza: 14 lines)
- **Rhyme Scheme:** Free verse (no regular rhyme scheme or meter)
- **Tone:** Dark, Prophetic, Apocalyptic, Ominous
- **Point of View:** Third-Person, with a prophetic voice (Yeats as a visionary)
- **Climax:** The vision of a terrifying new creature rising to replace the old world:

“And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,

Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?”

- **Significance:** A powerful expression of Yeats's belief that history moves in cycles (gyres). The poem reflects the collapse of the old world order and the rise of a terrifying new age. It remains a major commentary on chaos, violence, and societal collapse.
- **Setting:**
- **Time Setting:** Post-World War I era (chaotic modern world)

- **Place Setting:** Symbolic and universal (not specific), includes Biblical and mythological imagery

Key Notes

- **The Second Coming:** "The Second Coming" was written by William Butler Yeats in 1919, focusing on the chaotic period after World War I. At that time, the world was full of war, revolution, and social destruction—especially the First World War (1914–1918) and the Russian Revolution. Yeats believed that history moves in cycles (which he called “gyres”)—where every two thousand years, an old civilization collapses and something new is born.
- **The Idea of the Gyre (Cycle):** Yeats thought history moves in circles. At the end of each age, another begins—starting with destruction.