

The Windhover 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:** *The Windhover: To Christ our Lord*
- **Total Lines:** 14 lines.
- **Stanza:** 1 stanza, but the structure has 2 parts: Octave and Sestet.
- **Genre:** Poetry
- **Published Date:** 1918 (posthumously)
- **Written Date:** 1877
- **Form:** Petrarchan (Italian) Sonnet
- **Meter:** Sprung rhythm.
- **Rhyme Scheme:** ABABABAB CDCDCD
- **Tone:** Spiritual and reflective
- **Point of View:** First-person
- **Setting:** Open sky and the poet's inner reflection
- **Time Setting:** Morning
- **Place Setting:** Countryside or open natural landscape

Key Notes

- **Form and Structure of the Poem:** This poem is a sonnet. A sonnet is a poem of 14 lines. This sonnet is divided into two parts: Octave (the first 8 lines) and Sestet (the last 6 lines). Hopkins dedicated this poem "To Christ our Lord." In the Octave, the poet describes the flight of a falcon (the Windhover). But he is not just talking about a bird. Through the falcon, the poet sees the glory of God and a symbol of Christ. The Sestet expresses the speaker's emotional response to the scene.

- **The Windhover:** The Windhover is a dedicated poem, which Hopkins addressed “To Christ our Lord.” In this poem, the poet presents the flight of a falcon (windhover) as a symbol of divine power, beauty, and spiritual glory. It is a kind of religious hymn.
- **Falcon as Christ Symbol:** The falcon here is not just a bird—it is a symbol of Christ. Just as the falcon soars majestically in the sky, Christ is spiritually elevated and glorious. Through the bird’s control, strength, and beauty, a reflection of Christ is revealed.
- **Sprung Rhythm:** In this poem, Hopkins uses his own invented meter called “sprung rhythm.” In this rhythm, emphasis is placed on stressed syllables. This makes the language of the poem more lively and forceful.
- **Religious Imagery:** The poem contains strong religious symbols, word choices, and emotions. Words like “Brute beauty,” “Holy Ghost,” and “chevalier” reflect Christian spiritual themes and ideas.
- **Dynamic Movement:** The flight of the falcon is described as very energetic and powerful. The poet honors its movement by calling it a “dauphin”—a royal prince—and presents its flight as a symbol of divine strength.

The Windhover was written by Gerard Manley Hopkins in 1877. It is dedicated “To Christ our Lord.” Though short, it is a deeply spiritual poem. Through the image of a falcon (windhover) flying in the sky, Hopkins expresses the majesty, power, and spiritual glory of Christ.

Hopkins was a Jesuit priest. His poems often reflect religious themes, the beauty of nature, and the presence of God. This poem is a clear example of his deep faith. The falcon at the center of the poem is not just a bird, but a symbol of Christ—who is full of control, beauty, and the nobility of sacrifice.

In this poem, Hopkins uses his own invented meter called “sprung rhythm”, which makes the poem more lively, dynamic, and emotional. He uses powerful words like “brute beauty,” “valour,” and “sheer plod” to show how even hard work, suffering, and self-control can reveal the glory and beauty of God. The Windhover is not just a nature poem—it is a profound religious hymn. The soaring falcon becomes a symbol of eternal spiritual truth.