

The Windhover Summary

Writer: Gerard Manley Hopkins | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Octave (Lines 1-8) - The Beauty and Flight of the Bird: At the beginning of the poem, the poet says he sees a falcon in the morning. This bird is flying beautifully, very high in the sky. The poet calls it the “morning’s minion” — meaning the beloved bird of the morning. He also calls it “kingdom of daylight’s dauphin” — meaning the prince of the daytime. In this way, the poet gives royal honor to the bird.

The bird floats in the sky, controlling its wings carefully. Sometimes it pauses, then suddenly swoops down. Hopkins is amazed to see this scene. He sees beauty, power, and control in the bird’s flight. He sometimes compares the bird to a knight on horseback. Other times, he says it is as strong as fire or a dragon. In this part, the poet only describes the bird’s physical movement, speed, strength, and nobility.

Sestet (Lines 9-14) - The Poet’s Thoughts and Spiritual Response: Now the poet speaks about his own feelings. He says the bird has “brute beauty” — meaning it has a kind of wild strength but is still beautiful. This beauty fascinates the poet. His heart fills with joy. He thinks that even through hard work, suffering, and pain, beauty and glory can arise. For example: “sheer plod makes plough down sillion shine” means when the plough’s blade cuts deep into the earth, the soil shines and glows.

The poet also says, “blue-bleak embers” — meaning dying embers of a fire — can suddenly blaze up brightly again. In this way, the poet says that even ordinary things can show the beauty of God.