

Don Juan, Canto II – Lord Byron – Group Work

As you answer these questions, read the work in your text books (*Elements of Lit*, page 715) aloud. Your group (ideally 4 people) should divide up into the following:

- one person who stops the group when they get to appropriate line(s) and asks the questions below. This person should also be very aware of the time – keeping the group on track to finish before the bell.
- one person who records the answers (most answers here should not be long – a sentence or two)
- two people who alternate reading (one person reading one stanza then switching at the next stanza)

Enjoy your reading, ideally this should be read outside – under a tree with a picnic lunch on a bright spring morning...

Line #

Questions

- 8 Notice how the ocean is compared to a lake – big to small – what are some possible implications for a poem about individuals as opposed to big things like armies or countries? How does it make these two “alone” individuals seem next to such a big ocean? Remember, Wordsworth’s poem – where he said his lost love, Lucy, was like a star when only when is visible in the night (yes, it’s ONE, but there is also the viewer) – comment.
- 9-10 What do you see here that is also found in “Kubla Kahn” – what is the narrator doing (think narrative point of view)?
- 25-31 What aspect of Romantic Poetry do we see in these lines. Think of other Romantic Poets (especially Wordsworth). One thing many people admire about Byron is his ability to “paint a picture.” Do you agree – why or why not? Bring in our discussion of his poems – be specific.
- 31-40 What effect does the beauty of nature around them have on the two lovers? What, in turn, does it make us, the reader, think about their love – be thoughtful here.
Continuing with that idea, the speaker says they “[y]ielded to the the deep twilight’s purple charm”. How does this specifically make sense – given the context of the rest of this poem? Though Byron was not as focused on nature as Wordsworth – how have you seen its (nature’s) importance in this poem, up to this point?
- 52 Why earlier days? Whose early days? What does this have to do with the innocence of the lovers? Be specific? Connect this to what you answered for 31 to 40. Later in this year we will read Elizabeth Barret Browning, who says of her love (in Sonnet 43) that she loves him “with the passion put to use/ In my old griefs, and with my childhood’s faith /I love thee with a love I seemed to lose/ With my lost saints.” Connect thoughtfully & specifically.
- 57-60 **Meta Question:** How do these lines belie, deconstruct, or just plain undermine the very type of analysis we do in this class or are currently doing with this poem?
- 71-75 Have you ever had a moment in your life – that was so profound, it made you look at the your place in the universe (I know this is deep – that’s ok)? Think of Wordsworth’s “It is a Beauteous Evening” - Everyone think of that moment (in their lives), but you don’t need to share it unless you want to.
to with the recorder. Why do the two lovers think that they will never die at this particular moment? (71-75).
- 76 Explain what you think it means by saying that they “*thought* a language there” What does this say about their love? How does this fit in with John Donne’s poem “A Valediction Forbidding Mourning” (yes, it’s in your textbook – have someone look it up, while the others go on – then come back and figure this out).
- 85 Explain the line – “She was all which pure ignorance allows” – link this to what you wrote about line 52
- 88 Explain these lines and their definition of innocence. Complete the following sentence: You only need metal detectors in a world that imagines _____.
- 92 Again – back to Donne’s “Valediction”? What specific line from that poem? Yes, look it up.
- 97-104 Is the narrator as innocent, as naïve, as his subjects? Explain in a sentence or two using these lines.
- 107 Who are these “first parents” being referenced – what does this have to do with the innocence ascribed to the two lovers?
- 121-128 Explain each of the metaphors that are compared to the sleeping lovers (line 28). I count 6 of them (explain all)
- 135-136 Explain these lines. How can they be true? Again, what does that tell about Haidee? Be specific.
- 145-160 How might these cynical lines (misogynistic, anti-marriage, etc) be explained by Byron’s life? (yes I know author intentionality does not exist – let’s pretend for a moment) Be specific, but brief. Notice – they take the opposite view of Donne’s “Song” (look it up) – who does Donne blame for the “fall” of a relationship
- 161-168 Are we all victims of our passions? Explain (briefly and not very specifically)
- 184 What literary term is appropriate here? Think *The Rape of the Locke*. It was used a lot there too (see your group work on Pope’s poem – it begins with a “b” and it is not *showeros*).

When you finish the above: Quickly, with your pens out – read the poem on the back (also by Byron). As you read write down any connections to “Don Juan” and to (yes – we are going way back) *Grendel* (the book not the character). Does anyone in your group remember the Dragon’s vision of the end of the world – if you don’t look it up on your own and make the connection in your notes. Use your timekeeper here – make sure you finish the poem with at least 10 minutes left, so you can write up the connections – make sure you cite specifics from the poem “Darkness” (and *Grendel*) in answering.

Darkness by Lord Byron

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:
And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consum'd,
And men were gather'd round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face;
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch:
A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour
They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks
Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black.
The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smil'd;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world; and then again
With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild birds shriek'd
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd
And twin'd themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food.
And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again: a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
All earth was but one thought—and that was death
Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devour'd,
Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,

And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead
Lur'd their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answer'd not with a caress—he died.
The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies: they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things

For an unholy usage; they rak'd up,
And shivering scrap'd with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,
The populous and the powerful was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless—
A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropp'd
They slept on the abyss without a surge—
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
The moon, their mistress, had expir'd before;
The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them—She was the Universe.