

# Gerard Manley Hopkins

## God's Grandeur

Wrap your mind around these ones!

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Gerrard Manley Hopkins was born in 1844, the first of nine children. His parents were staunch Anglicans. He attended a grammar school in Highgate and then continued on to Oxford University. His search for religion, however, caused him to fall under the influence of the great Catholic convert, John Henry Newman.

As a result, Hopkins became a Catholic in 1866 and then joined the Society of Jesus the following year. Initially Hopkins burned all his early poetry because he believed it was a symbol of ambition in the world. He later changed his mind, being influenced by the writings of the medieval scholar Duns Scotus who saw art as a reflection of God within the world.

From this concept, Hopkins developed his philosophy of Inscape and Instress. Inscape is the underlying form that marks the essence of all things, the God-principle which exists in everything. Instress, on the other hand, is our ability to experience that God-principle.

Everything has Inscape. In other words, everything has a God-principle. However, not everyone has Instress. The person who watches the glory of the setting sun but is reminded of a poached egg clearly lacks Instress.

The poet studied Theology in Wales, which is probably where he picked up the Welsh lyrical way of speaking and writing. He would translate this into his poetry in what he called Sprung Rhythm.

Hopkins was ordained a priest in 1877 and then worked as a curate in Sheffield, Oxford and London before moving on to become parish priest in slum parishes in Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. None of this was intellectually suitable for a man who had such a brilliant mind.

He then became a professor of Latin and Greek, first at Stonyhurst College in Lancashire and then at University College in Dublin. His frustration, however, at having to mark a plethora of mediocre scripts sent him spiralling into a state of deep depression from which he would not emerge. He died of typhoid fever in 1889. He was 44 years of age.

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- "And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs."
    - Explain in your own words what the poet is describing in these two lines. (4)
    - Indicate, with reference to the text, what language devices are being used here. (4)
  - "Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings."
    - The term "Holy Ghost" is seldom used any more. What is the modern term? (1)
    - What is the connection between the "Holy Ghost" and the "warm breast" and "bright wings"? (4)
  - What point is the poet making in the OCTAVE? (4)
  - How does the SESTET contrast with the Octave? (4)

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