

William Butler Yeats
Second Coming
Even more challenging questions!

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1. "Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming!"
 - Is the poet approaching this theme from a particularly Christian point of view? If not, then what does he mean by "the Second Coming"? (8)

2. "Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight."
 - What is meant by "Spiritus Mundi"? (4)
 - What does he mean when he says that this "vast image . . . troubles his sight". (4)

3. "Somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds."
 - What is this image? (2)
 - Why would its gaze be "blank and pitiless as the sun"? (4)
 - How could it be moving its "slow thighs"? What message is the poet attempting to portray here? (4)

4. "The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"
 - What does Yeats mean when he speaks of "twenty centuries of stony sleep"? (4)
 - Comment on the poet's depiction of the "rocking cradle". (4)
 - Is this scene in Bethlehem a normal nativity scene? If not, what image is the poet attempting to convey? (4)

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