

W.B. Yeats  
Wild swans at Coole  
More challenging questions!

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1. The trees are in their autumn beauty,  
The woodland paths are dry,  
Under the October twilight the water  
Mirrors a still sky.

- Do you think it is important for the greater meaning of the poem that it is autumn? (4)

2. The nineteenth autumn has come upon me  
Since I first made my count;  
I saw, before I had well finished,  
All suddenly mount  
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings  
Upon their clamorous wings.

- Is there a link between the counting of the swans and the fact that it is the nineteenth autumn? (4)
- Comment on the imagery in the words "scatter wheeling in great broken rings". (4)

3. All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,  
The first time on this shore,  
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,  
Trode with a lighter tread.

- Contrast the way in which the poet sees the swans and the sadness of his own existence. (4)
- What does the poet mean when he speaks of "the bell-beat of their wings above [his] head"? (2)

4. Unweari'd still, lover by lover,  
They paddle in the cold  
Companionable streams or climb the air  
Their hearts have not grown old;  
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,  
Attend upon them still.

- What do the words "lover by lover", "companionable", "passion" and "conquest" reflect about the poet's mood? (4)

5. Among what rushes will they build,  
By what lake's edge or pool  
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day  
To find they have flown away?

- Why is the poet afraid that the swans will one day fly away? (4)
- Comment on the effectiveness of the final stanza as a fitting conclusion to the poem. (4)

GENERAL QUESTION

- Which word would BEST sum up the tone of this poem? Explain your choice. (4)

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