

Name: _____ Class: _____

Answer to A Child's Question

By Samuel Taylor Coleridge
1802

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was an English poet, literary critic, and a founder of the Romantic Movement¹ in England, as well as a major influence on American transcendentalism.² The following poem is, as the title suggests, the answer to a child's question about birdsong and love. As you read, take notes on the structure of the poem (i.e. rhyme, meter, etc.) and how it helps form the mood.

- [1] Do you ask what the birds say? The sparrow, the dove,
The linner and thrush³ say, "I love and I love!"
In the winter they're silent—the wind is so strong;
What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud song.
- [5] But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,
And singing, and loving—all come back together.
But the lark⁴ is so brimful⁵ of gladness and love,
The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
That he sings, and he sings; and for ever sings he—
- [10] "I love my Love, and my Love loves me!"



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1. The Romantic Movement was a literary and artistic period that lasted from about the late 18th century until 1850. Romanticism was characterized by an emphasis on emotion, individualism, nature, and beauty.
2. Transcendentalism was a philosophical and literary movement that lasted from the early 19th century until about 1900. It focused individualism, believing that both nature and humans are inherently good.
3. The linner and the thrush are types of songbirds.
4. Another type of songbird
5. **Brimful (adjective):** filled with something to the point of overflowing

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best describes a major theme of the text?
 - A. Love is fleeting, like the seasons, and can be hard to hold on to.
 - B. Nature can teach humans how to be open about their feelings.
 - C. A part of growing up means learning what love really is.
 - D. The joyful songs of birds can inspire listeners to think of love.

2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports your answer to Part A?
 - A. "Do you ask what the birds say?" (Line 1)
 - B. "In the winter they're silent — the wind is so strong" (Line 3)
 - C. "But the lark is so brimful of gladness and love" (Line 7)
 - D. "That he sings, and he sings; and for ever sings he" (Line 9)

3. What does the repetition of "I love" suggest about the speaker's point of view?
 - A. The speaker thinks the child's question is silly and invents an equally silly response.
 - B. The speaker sees the natural world through a playful and imaginative lens.
 - C. The speaker expresses contempt for those who cannot stop talking about love.
 - D. The speaker is reminded of all the love they experienced in their younger days.

4. The speaker's use of rhythm in line 9 creates a feeling of...
 - A. love and obsession.
 - B. strength and endurance.
 - C. carefreeness and bliss.
 - D. satisfaction and calm.

5. How does the question in line 1 contribute to the overall meaning of this poem?
