

Spring or Winter

A.E. HOUSMAN'S BELOVED POEM ABOUT THE CHERRY TREE GETS UNZIPPED. TAKE A LOOK INSIDE.

Loveliest of Trees BY A.E. HOUSMAN

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

To Unzip Poetry:

>> **TO REVEAL**
THE TRUTH OF
A POEM

>> **TO**
ANALYZE
A POEM'S
MEANING

>> **TO CLARIFY**
THE FORM
BEHIND THE
WORDS



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**ALICE HLIDKOVA UNZIPS
“LOVELIEST OF TREES”**

In this poem, cherries are a reference to rebirth as part of the life cycle. One can interpret that cherries are a symbol of love, and the cherry tree covered in snow can symbolize deteriorating love. This poem could also be about the innocent youth that eventually becomes old. In the first stanza, “Loveliest of trees, the cherry now” is like a newborn that blooms with beauty and innocence. The fruit is attached to the tree branch, “hung with bloom along the bough,” which could be a reference to a child growing into adulthood with the parent's guidance. The youth wears white, a color of purity and innocence.

In the second and third stanzas, the poem shifts. The lines, “Now, of my threescore years and ten / Twenty will not come again” reveal that the speaker of the poem is 20 and is reflecting on his mortality. Snow represents death, and the cycle of the cherry tree is a reference to the human life cycle. A cherry like a young person is pure, innocent, and beautiful. With time, it matures into a ripe fruit, and then falls off the branch to start a new life. Even when the speaker in the poem passes away, the life cycle of the woodlands will continue.

**Unzipped:
Your Turn**

- >> HOW OLD IS THE SPEAKER OF THE POEM? HOW DO YOU INTERPRET THE MATH IN THE SECOND STANZA?
- >> DO YOU THINK THE SNOW IS LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE? WHY?
- >> WHAT PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE DOES THIS POEM PRESENT?

>> **SEND US** the title and author of your favorite poem, and tell us why you love it. What is it about the poem that speaks to you? What's your favorite image? How does it relate to you and your life? Send your response to LC@Scholastic.com.

**ABOUT
ALFRED
EDWARD
HOUSMAN**

BORN
March 26, 1859,
Fockbury,
Worcestershire,
England.



DIED
April 30, 1936,
Cambridge,
England.

OCCUPATIONS
Housman knew both Greek and Latin. He was a professor of Latin as well as a renowned translator of ancient poets.
PRIVATE GUY
Despite great success as a poet and a scholar, Housman lived as a recluse and studiously avoided the public eye.