**She Walks in Beauty**

                                      1   
    She walks in beauty, like the night   
        Of cloudless climes and starry skies;   
    And all that's best of dark and bright   
        Meet in her aspect and her eyes:   
    Thus mellowed to that tender light   
        Which heaven to gaudy day denies.   
                                      2   
    One shade the more, one ray the less,   
        Had half impaired the nameless grace   
    Which waves in every raven tress,   
        Or softly lightens o'er her face;   
    Where thoughts serenely sweet express,   
        How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.   
                                      3   
    And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,   
        So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,   
    The smiles that win, the tints that glow,   
        But tell of days in goodness spent,   
    A mind at peace with all below,   
        A heart whose love is innocent!

Questions About Appearances

1. Why is it important that the woman is a brunette?
2. Why does Byron reverse the usual simile, and compare the woman to "night" instead of to a "summer's day"? What's the effect of that unexpected comparison?
3. How many different binaries, or sets of opposites, does Byron employ to describe this woman's beauty?
4. What, exactly, makes the woman so gorgeous?

Questions About Principles

1. Why does the speaker of the poem emphasize the woman's goodness, in addition to her beauty?
2. The speaker ascribes a lot of general virtues to the woman, but he's short on specifics – he doesn't give any examples. Why doesn't the speaker give us any specific details about her goodness?
3. How can he tell how good and virtuous she is?
4. What is the effect of ending the poem with the woman's virtue of "innocence"?

Questions About Women and Femininity

1. Why doesn't the woman speak in the poem? How would the poem change if we were given a chance to hear her say something?
2. Why isn't the woman named? What is the effect of praising an unnamed beauty? How would your interpretation of the poem change if she were named?
3. What's the effect of the poet's idealization of the unnamed woman?
4. Why does he describe her through metaphor and simile? Why does her beauty need mediation through comparison?

Questions About Awe and Amazement

1. Why does the speaker choose to compare this woman to things as vast as "night" and "starry skies"? Why not compare her to something more tangible?
2. Does the woman seem human to you? Why or why not?
3. Do you think the speaker is more in awe of the woman's beauty, or her virtue? Why?
4. Which metaphors or images suggest the speaker's awe most strongly? Why?

Symbol Analysis – night/dark/day

The contrast between night and day, and dark and light, is the image that sets up the whole poem. But, as we point out in the "What's Up With the Title?" section, this contrast is a startling image: we're not used to comparing beautiful women to "night," we're used to comparing them to "summer's days," like in Shakespeare's [Sonnet 18](http://www.shmoop.com/sonnet-18/). But Byron turns that convention on its ear, and suggests that it's the harmony of two contrasting opposites, like night and day, or light and dark, that make something (or someone) really beautiful.

* Line 1: This is where the basic **simile** of the whole poem is established: the beauty of the woman is "like the night."
* Line 2: There isn't any punctuation on the end of the first line so, as you're reading, you should be sure not to pause there. Places where the sentence spills over onto the next line, instead of ending or pausing at the line break, are called **enjambments**. Check out the**alliteration** in this line – the repeated *cl* sounds in "cloudless climes" are very musical, and the repeated *s* sound, or **sibilance**, is rather soothing.
* Line 5: "Tender light" is an odd expression, isn't it? "Tender" describes a tactile sensation, while "light" is something you see. Mixing up the senses like this is called **synesthesia**. It's as though the woman's beauty is so overwhelming that the poet's senses short-circuit, and he *feels* things he usually sees.
* Line 6: "Heaven" is **personified** in this line – after all, the sky can't really "deny" anyone anything, so the poet is giving it attributes of a human being.

Symbol Analysis – innocent love and serenity

The speaker never says that he's in love with the woman he describes, but you might very well suspect that he has the hots for her – after all, he goes on and on about how gorgeous she is. But the final line of the poem seems to be an attempt to dispel the reader's suspicions: he insists that her "love," at least, is "innocent." He describes her personality almost as much as her exterior beauty, by the end.

* Line 11: The **sibilance**, or repeated *s* sound, in this line ("thought**ss**erenely **s**weet expre**ss**") create the kind of smooth, soothing, "serene" feeling that the line describes.
* Line 12: Byron uses a **metaphor** to describe the woman's mind: he says that it is the "dwelling place" of her thoughts.
* Line 18: It's a common poetic convention – almost a **cliché** – to talk about a person's "heart" feeling a certain way. But if you think about it, it's also a **synecdoche**: the "heart" is only a part of the whole person, and a synecdoche is when you substitute a part for the whole.

Symbol Analysis – raven/dark coloured hair

It's important to note that the beautiful woman is a brunette. What's so special about that, you ask? Well, in Byron's day, conventional English beauties were all pale and blonde. So for him to write a poem that not only praises the beauty of a woman with "raven" (black) hair, but even goes so far as to say that real beauty requires a contrast of light and dark, or day and night, was pretty startling.

* Line 7: This line points out that the woman's beauty is a perfect balance of light and dark – if she were any darker ("one shade the more"), the harmony would get messed up. The line itself is perfectly balanced between opposites: "shade" and "ray," "more" and "less." But if you think about it, the two halves of the line say the same thing: "one shade the more" means, "if she were any darker." But "one ray the less" also means, "if she were any darker." It's like saying, "heads I win, tails you lose" – it sounds like you're saying two opposite things but, really, the meaning of both is the same.
* Line 9: We're so used to hearing dark hair described as "raven" that it's almost a **cliché**, but it's actually a **metaphor**.

Symbol Analysis – smiles and blushes

The poet keeps emphasizing that the nameless beauty isn't just a pretty face – her exterior beauty is a reflection of her interior goodness. He keeps remarking on both her smiles and her blushes, which, after all, are half-unconscious external responses to internal moods or feelings. So there's yet another binary, or set of opposites, to keep track of in this poem – the woman's inside and outside traits.

* Line 11: The poet **personifies** the woman's thoughts by saying that they "express" things in her face.
* Lines 14-15: The woman's "smiles" and the "tints" or blushes in her cheeks are **personified** when the poet describes them as "eloquent."
* Line 16: The smiles and blushes are **personified** a final time when they "tell of" all the time the woman has spent doing good deeds.