

John Keats
Ode to Autumn
Stanza 2: Some challenging questions!

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"Ode to Autumn" is regarded as Keats's best poem, written with graphic clarity just before his death. He personifies the season, dressed in its rich autumn colours and alive with life and mellow vibrancy. Everything is maturing now. The fruits on the trees are at their sweetest, the wine is oozing with heady tranquillity. Everywhere the birds and the insects are enriching the countryside with their melody.

1. "Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind."
 - What is a "granary floor"? (2)
 - What happens when one "winnows"? What then would be meant by the "winnowing wind"? (4)
 - In what way would one or could one find Autumn "sitting careless on a granary floor" or with her hair "soft-lifted by the winnowing wind"? (4)

2. "Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies."
 - Why is there a reference to poppies within the context of this poem? (4)
 - Why would Autumn be found "sound asleep" on a "half-reap'd furrow"? (2)

3. "And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours."
 - What is a "gleaner"? (2)
 - Why should Autumn have a "laden head" and why does she keep her head steady? (4)
 - Comment on the use of the word "oozings" to describe the cider-press. (4)

GENERAL QUESTION:

4. Is Autumn, as depicted in this Ode, presented as male or female? Be able to explain your understanding carefully. (4)

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