

W.B. Yeats
An Irish airman forsees his death
Some challenging questions!

Worksheet by:
Keith Tankard
Knowledge4Africa.com

1. "I know that I shall meet my fate
Somewhere among the clouds above."
 - If the poet was still alive when he wrote this poem, who then was the airman who presumably died up there amongst the clouds? (2)
 - The speaker says that he would meet his fate. Is this then a fatalistic poem, i.e. the speaker has no control over his fate but must die in the clouds because Fate demands it? (4)
 - What war was being spoken of? How do you know? (2)

2. "Those that I fight I do not hate
Those that I guard I do not love;
My country is Kiltartan Cross,
My countrymen Kiltartan's poor."
 - Comment on the contrast between the words "fight" and "guard", between "hate" and "love". (4)
 - Who was the airman supposedly fighting, whom he should therefore have been supposedly hating? (2)
 - Why would the airman not hate those against whom he was fighting? (4)
 - Why does the airman not love those whom he is supposedly guarding? (4)

3. "No likely end could bring them loss
Or leave them happier than before."
 - The poet explores the pointlessness of war. Explain the logic of his argument. (4)
 - The poet also explores the contemporary philosophy of the inevitability of fate as regards the poor. What is this inevitability of fate? (4)

4. "A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death."
 - Comment on the airman's use of the antithesis "this life, this death" in justifying his reasons for flying to meet his death. (4)

<www.knowledge4africa.com>

This worksheet is copyrighted. No part of it may be copied or printed in any form whatever without the express permission in writing of the author. The sole exception is for non-profit educational purposes.