

Introduction

You can listen to a recording of this poem at:
<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/poems/autumn>

This support pack contains the following materials:

- a pre-reading vocabulary activity
- the poem that you can listen to
- a comprehension activity

Before you read

Activity 1

Keats' poem appeals to all of the senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. The sounds of the words are vivid and musical. Match the 9 words from the poem in the first table to their definitions in the second table.

a. bloom	b. mossed	c. clammy
d. twitter	e. wailful	f. plump
g. ooziings	h. bleat	i. winnowing

1. To sing or chirp like a bird.
2. Covered in green moss.
3. Damp, moist.
4. Throwing corn into the wind to separate the grain from the chaff.
5. Liquid seeping or being squeezed out.
6. To make the sound of a sheep.
7. To fatten or fill out.
8. Making a sorrowful or high-pitched sound.
9. To develop like a flower.

Read the poem

To Autumn

by John Keats

I
 Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
 Close bosom friend of the maturing sun,
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves
 run:
 To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,

Until they think warm days will never cease,
 For summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

II
 Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
 Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers;

And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

III
Where are the songs of spring? Aye, where are
they?
Think not of them, thou hast music too -

While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue.
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from the garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

After you read

Activity 2

Below are some of the ideas from the poem. Can you put them in the same order as they appear in the poem?

1. Autumn has a 'hook' (or sickle) for harvesting crops and falls asleep during the harvesting.
2. Autumn is seen as a woman working with the sun to ripen the fruit.
3. Gnats wail, lambs bleat, crickets sing, robins whistle.
4. She has her own music like the spring.
5. She makes the flowers bloom so the bees fill their hives with honey.
6. She ripens grapes, apples and nuts.
7. She watches the cider being pressed from apples.
8. The swallows twitter as they prepare to fly south and escape the winter.

www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish

Answers

Activity 1: 1. d; 2. b; 3. c; 4. i; 5. g; 6. h; 7. f; 8. e; 9. a

Activity 2: 2; 6; 5; 1; 7; 4; 3; 8