

14th February

Memory verse

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,
ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

1 Corinthians 11:26

You have probably heard these words so often that you know them by heart already. They are generally used at the communion service or Lord's Supper when we remember the death of the Lord Jesus in the way that he told us to do. More about this verse tomorrow.

A poem to say aloud or learn

Many, many welcomes,
February fair-maid,
Ever as of old time,
Solitary firstling,
Coming in the cold time,
Prophet of the gay time,
Prophet of the May time,
Prophet of the roses,
Many, many welcomes,
February fair-maid!



Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

Have you seen snowdrops this year? They really liven up our gardens at this time of the year. It is good to see wild ones too on roadside verges or in woods. Look out for them when you are out and about. If you have some in your garden or can get close to some in the wild do look at them carefully. You will notice that the flowers have six petals and they are not all the same. The three outer petals are white and the three inner ones are tipped with green. If you want to draw a snowdrop the botanical drawing on the left may inspire you.



Do you know what Tennyson means by the words highlighted in green? Why do you think he chose these particular words?¹ Tennyson uses repetition in this poem – many, prophet, time – to give it a simple homely feel. Notice that the first two lines occur again at the end, making a frame for the rest of the poem – and making it easy to learn as well. Every line has the same rhythm too. There are only two pairs of rhymes – I have marked them in pink and blue – and that adds to the simple feel. If you began a poetry memorisation programme on 5th January (if not look at that lesson and begin one now) you could include it. The whole poem is almost like a nursery rhyme – which leads on to the next item in today's lesson which is about one of a group of artists who admired Tennyson's poems...

1 Answers and suggestions at the end of the lesson.

A picture to look at²



2 If you want to see this picture for yourself, it can be found in the Manchester Art Gallery.

I'm sure you know the old nursery rhyme "Sing a Song of Sixpence":

Sing a song of sixpence,
A pocket full of rye.
Four and twenty blackbirds,
Baked in a pie.

When the pie was opened
The birds began to sing;
Wasn't that a dainty dish,
To set before the king.

The king was in his counting house,
Counting out his money;
The queen was in the parlour,
Eating bread and honey.

The maid was in the garden,
Hanging out the clothes,
When down came a blackbird
And pecked off her nose.

They made such a commotion,
that little Jenny wren
Flew down into the garden,
and put it back again.

The picture above is an illustration of the last two lines of verse 3 by Valentine Cameron Prinsep (1838 – 1904) who was born on 14th February.

Prinsep was an artist who followed the ideas of a group of painters called "Pre Raphaelites". Their name means they were influenced by the style of the artists of the fourteenth century – before (pre) the painter Raphael (1483-1520). The things the Pre Raphaelites liked about these older paintings were the many details they contained and their intense colours. They wanted to study nature closely and disliked the often dark paintings of their immediate predecessors. You will see these ideas in Cameron's painting if you study the picture carefully. Pre Raphaelites wanted a jewel-like quality in their colours. They painted thin glazes onto a wet white background to achieve this. If you look at "The Queen was in the Parlour" you can see this jewel effect. The queen's silk robe shimmers and under it she wears a rich gold and silver gown. Her wavy hair shines as though she has brushed it 100 times a day. As for the details, you can look at the picture for a long time finding new things. Can you see where she has put down her crown? She has been working – her tools hang at her waist. The hinges of her parlour cupboard are fantastic dragon shapes and the upper part is usually concealed behind a rich brocaded curtain, although we see it open in the picture. Inside are all sorts of bottles and jars from which the queen has selected her honey pot. There is a loaf too from which she has just pulled the piece she is eating. Can you find her clock? What about the floor, the wallpaper, the basket of lilies...?

The queen looks at us out of the picture with an expression which is contemplative and at the same time a little surprised as though she has been caught off guard in a relaxed moment with her bread and honey. The slightly strange angle of her head gives the painting a medieval feel as do the lilies which often occur in medieval paintings of Mary and the angel Gabriel.

Something to read about Bible translation

Cyril, “apostle to the Slavs,” (826–869) died on 14th February. In 862 he was sent with his brother, Methodius, by the emperor as missionaries to what is now the Czech republic, where they taught in the native Slavic tongue. The brothers came from Thessalonica and already had some skill in the Slavic language. Cyril had been a librarian at the Hagia Sophia³ and a professor of philosophy. He wanted the Slavic people to have God's word in their own language. In order to translate the Bible into Slavic, Cyril invented the Glagolitic alphabet which developed into the alphabet today known today as “Cyrillic.” This is the alphabet still used in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and elsewhere. At this time, the idea was growing up that the Bible should only be available in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The Slavic people called this the “Trilingual Heresy” and Cyril was deeply opposed to it. Below is today's memory verse from the Russian Bible which is written in Cyrillic script:

Ибо всякий раз, когда вы едите хлеб сей и пьете чашу сию, смерть Господню
возвещаете, доколе Он придет.

Answers and suggestions:

Tennyson uses “fair-maid” to describe the snowdrop because this pretty (“fair”) flower is mostly white which is a pure, maidenly colour. Solitary means alone. Snowdrops do not generally grow alone but in clumps but Tennyson uses this word because the snowdrop is the only *kind* of flower common at this time of year. Tennyson calls the snowdrop a prophet because it makes us think of other flowers that will *come later* in the year and reminds us that the cold February weather will not last for ever.

3 See the lesson for May 28 to 29th.