

## Worksheet 2. Questions for Further Discussion

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Read and refer to the information included in Traditional Irish Sources to work through the following Questions for Further Discussion concerning “[The Song of Wandering Aengus](#).”

### 1. Comparison of “The Song of Wandering Aengus” and “The Dream of Aengus Óg”

There’s evidence that Yeats drew heavily on his knowledge of Celtic mythology for his poetry. How are the elements in Yeats’s poem “The Song of Wandering Aengus” both similar to and different from the Celtic myth “The Dream of Aengus Óg”?

### 2. Comparison of “The Dream of Aengus Óg” and Stories from Greek and Roman Mythology

Yeats claimed that “The Song of Wandering Aengus” was based (at least in part) on a Greek folk song and he noted many similarities between Greek and Irish mythology.

How is the Celtic myth “The Dream of Aengus Óg” (especially the experience of shapeshifting) reminiscent of stories from Greek or Roman mythology?

Note: There are many examples of Greek myths in which gods change into animal forms, such as Danaë into a shower of gold; Europa into a bull; Leda into a swan, etc. Many other transformational stories are depicted in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, such as Daphne’s transformation into a laurel tree. Learn more in the EDSITEment curriculum unit: [Ovid’s \*Metamorphoses\*: A Common Core Exemplar \(3 lessons\)](#)

### 3. Comparison of “The Song of Wandering Aengus” and Stories from other Traditions

Have students reflect on the poem “The Song of Wandering Aengus” and identify echoes or remnants from stories in other traditions and legends from other cultures.

### 4. Solar and Lunar Imagery in “The Song of Wandering Aengus”

In an essay published in 1904, Yeats discusses the allegorical union represented by the marriage of the sun and the moon. He writes of their symbolism in a passage on solar and lunar imagery:

Old writers had an admirable symbolism that attributed certain energies to the influence of the sun, and certain others to the lunar influence. To lunar influence belong all thoughts and emotions that were created by the community, by the common people, by nobody knows who, and to the sun all that came from the high disciplined or individual kingly mind. I myself imagine a marriage of the sun and moon in the arts I take most pleasure in; and now bride and bridegroom but exchange, as it were, full cups of gold and silver, and now they are one in a mystical embrace.

***“The Song of Wandering Aengus” by W. B. Yeats: A Common Core Exemplar***

How does this passage on solar and lunar imagery from Yeats’s 1904 essay apply to “The Song of Wandering Aengus,” especially the last two lines? “The silver apples of the moon, / The golden apples of the sun.”

**5. Comparison of Two Aisling Poems: W.B. Yeats and Seamus Heaney**

Compare the imagery used by Yeats in his romantic 19<sup>th</sup>-century aisling, “The Song of Wandering Aengus,” with a late 20<sup>th</sup>-century aisling, “A Hazel Stick for Catherine Ann,” written by celebrated Irish poet Seamus Heaney, in *Opened Ground: Selected Poems, 1966–1996* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 214. [Note: Catherine Ann in the title of Heaney’s poem is the poet’s own daughter, who was 12 years old when this was written.]

What images do these two aislings have in common? Do they share any other commonalities? In what ways are they different? Which aisling resonates more with 21<sup>st</sup>-century students? Why?