

Module 6: Examining the World to Discover Truth

Topic 2 Content: "Kubla Khan" Summary

Introduction



In the context of Coleridge's dream, "Kubla Khan" is a poem that remains incomplete, just a "fragment of a vision," as Coleridge referred to it. Yet the final stanza serves as the synthesis of the prior two, tying together the themes of a lush and majestic nature and daring human supremacy over beauty and art. Hover your cursor over each of sections below to learn more about Coleridge's poem "Kubla Khan."

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Stanza One

In the first stanza, the great emperor Kubla Khan orders for a grand palace, referred to as a "pleasure-dome," to be built in the exotic land of Xanadu. The palace grounds have gardens and trees, but they also have walls and towers surrounding them. In the wild landscape beyond the walls, there are ancient forests and green hills.

The speaker also mentions a river named Alph that runs through immense caverns and empties into the dark sea.





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Stanza Two

 <p>Stanza One</p>	<p>In the second stanza, the speaker contrasts the majestic beauty of the paradise described in the opening stanza with a nature that is turbulent and "savage." The speaker turns back to the river and describes how it bursts forth from a fountain in a chasm beneath a moon that is haunted by a woman wailing for her "demon-lover."</p> <p>In the distance, Kubla Khan hears "ancestral voices prophesying war!" His paradise may not be a perfect sanctuary from a destiny of warfare.</p>	 <p>Stanza Three</p>
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Stanza Three



Stanza One **Stanza Two**

In the third stanza, the speaker describes a vision of a "damsel with a dulcimer," an exotic Abyssinian who serves as an artistic muse. The music she plays could inspire the speaker if only he could remember her song.

Then he would build his own "dome in the air" and "caves of ice" that would rival those of Kubla Khan. Any witnesses to this new paradise would cry "Beware!" of the mighty khan with "flashing eyes" who elicits "holy dread." He has fed on honeydew and "drunk the milk of Paradise."

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