


Module 6: Examining the World to Discover Truth Topic 2 Content: Natural Elements in "Ode to the West Wind"

Introduction

Natural Elements in "Ode to the West Wind"

Canto I: Earth Canto II: Sky Canto III: Water Canto IV: Wish Canto V: Fire

Introduction



Click each of the folder tabs to examine Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem "Ode to the West Wind" in greater detail.

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Canto I: Earth

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Canto I: Earth



The first canto introduces the West Wind and its relationship to the autumn season. After the leaves turn "[y]ellow, and black... and hectic red," it is the role of the West Wind to carry them to their "dark wintry bed." Each seed lies like a "corpse within its grave," yet when Spring comes, she will reawaken the "dreaming earth." The canto ends with the speaker's appeal to the West Wind to "hear, oh hear!"

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Canto II: Sky

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Canto II: Sky



The second canto turns to the sky and remarks on the power of the West Wind as it moves clouds through the air, carrying with it "Angels of rain and lightning." The imagery of death reappears as the West Wind sings a dirge, or funeral song, to the "dying year." Likewise, the stormy night sky becomes "a dome of a vast sepulcher," or tomb. Building the tension, the speaker beseeches the West Wind to once again "hear!"

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Canto III: Water

Natural Elements in "Ode to the West Wind"

Canto I: Earth Canto II: Sky **Canto III: Water** Canto IV: Wish Canto V: Fire

Canto III: Water



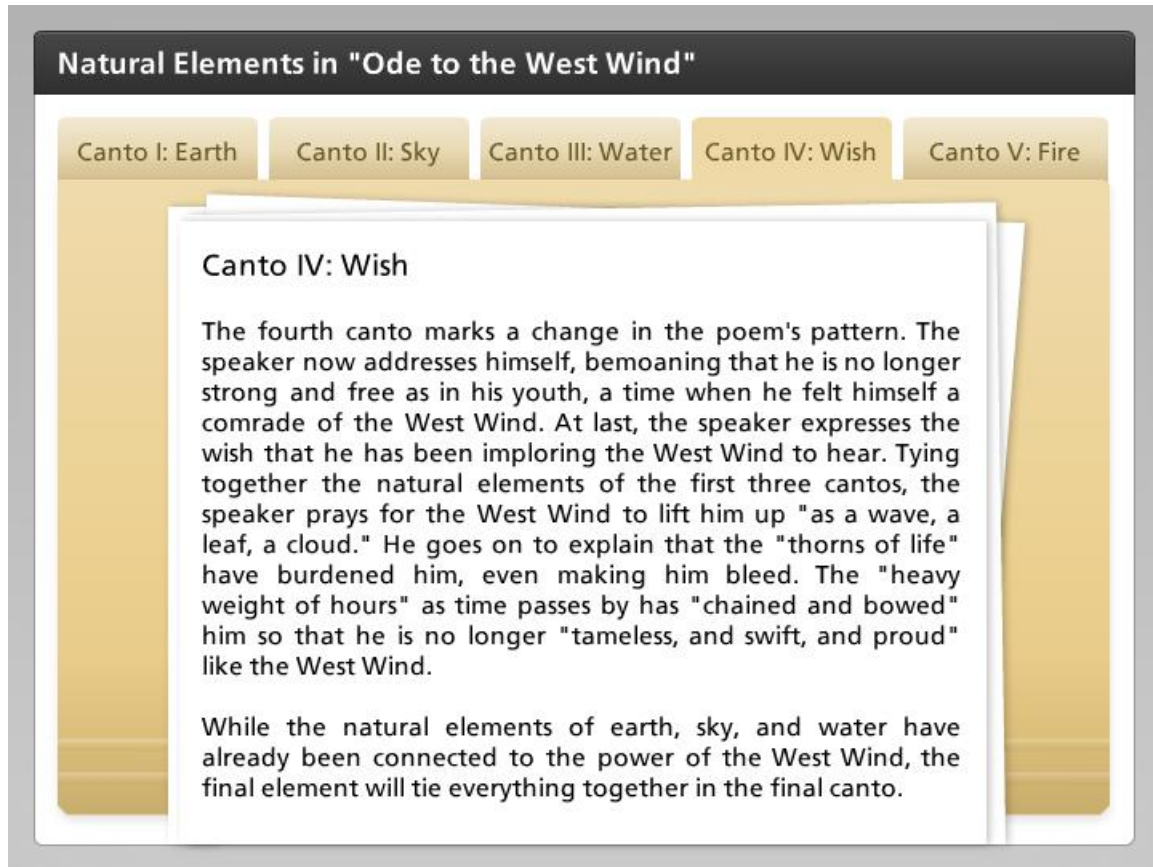
The third canto moves to the water. The West Wind awakens the Mediterranean Sea from his "summer dreams" and stirs the Atlantic waters so that they "cleave themselves into chasms." When the seaweed and other marine plants hear the West Wind's voice and "grow gray with fear," the speaker once more cries out "oh, hear!" to the wind.

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Canto IV: Wish



The screenshot shows a digital presentation interface. At the top, a dark grey header contains the title "Natural Elements in 'Ode to the West Wind'". Below the header is a navigation bar with five tabs: "Canto I: Earth", "Canto II: Sky", "Canto III: Water", "Canto IV: Wish", and "Canto V: Fire". The "Canto IV: Wish" tab is selected and highlighted. The main content area displays a white card with the following text:

Canto IV: Wish

The fourth canto marks a change in the poem's pattern. The speaker now addresses himself, bemoaning that he is no longer strong and free as in his youth, a time when he felt himself a comrade of the West Wind. At last, the speaker expresses the wish that he has been imploring the West Wind to hear. Tying together the natural elements of the first three cantos, the speaker prays for the West Wind to lift him up "as a wave, a leaf, a cloud." He goes on to explain that the "thorns of life" have burdened him, even making him bleed. The "heavy weight of hours" as time passes by has "chained and bowed" him so that he is no longer "tameless, and swift, and proud" like the West Wind.

While the natural elements of earth, sky, and water have already been connected to the power of the West Wind, the final element will tie everything together in the final canto.

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Canto V: Fire

Natural Elements in "Ode to the West Wind"

Canto I: Earth Canto II: Sky Canto III: Water Canto IV: Wish Canto V: Fire

Canto V: Fire



The fifth canto opens with a metaphor comparing the speaker with a lyre, or stringed instrument. The speaker beckons the West Wind to use him as a lyre, making autumnal music that is "sweet though in sadness." Once the speaker is one with the West Wind, he hopes to spread throughout the world and experience "a new birth" just as "withered leaves" do. The final element, fire, appears in the imagery of this rebirth, rising from "an unextinguished hearth" of "ashes and sparks." But this is a fire that reawakens the world to the speaker's newly inspired art. The speaker ends with a question addressed to the West Wind: "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

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