



By Philip Larkin

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Understanding the Poem

1. What does the bird in the poem announce? How is this related to the title, 'Coming'?

Answer: The poem 'Coming' by Philip Larkin is a celebration of the advent of the spring. To express the happiness the poet sets the plot of house fronts clothed in chilly and yellow light. Amidst all this, a thrush sings a welcoming song. It seems the whole nature is dancing with joy at the arrival of the new season. The thrush, sitting in a garden shrub, laurel, in the deep bare garden, is humming repeatedly in its fresh-peeled voice "that" it will be spring soon. This joy full singing of the thrush imparts an "astonishing" effect on the brickwork of the houses. The poet feels happy as well to see the beauty that nature encompasses. In fact it is through the voice of the thrush that the poet has tried to express that how overwhelmed he is on the "coming" of the spring.

2. Why is the speaker's childhood described as 'a forgotten boredom'?

Answer: The autobiographical element makes a reader curious to know about Larkin's childhood. His parents were very loving and affectionate. However, he recalls his childhood as a dejected one. He talks of himself in depreciating terms. It appears that the poet had a very poor concept of himself. It is also known that Philip suffered slight stammer in childhood that endured for the rest of his life, though reduced. If the reader pays attention, argues John Woley, it is not difficult to note the contradiction in the term "forgotten boredom". If, like Larkin says, he has forgotten his childhood, the question is, how can he comment so confidently that it was a bored one? However, it may be concluded that Larkin's childhood did not have any memories that he was fond of. He even remarked once that his biography could begin when he was 21, which implies that nothing spectacular happened before that. Thus, Philip Larkin recalls his childhood as "a forgotten boredom".

3. What causes the element of surprise when the child comes on the scene of 'adult reconciling'?

Answer: As Larkin is absorbed in the resonant humming of the thrush, he transcends present to his boring childhood, which he feels is best forgotten. The poet is transformed into a child. He feels happy like a child who feels happy just by watching elders reconciling with each other. The child comprehends nothing yet smiles just because the adults are happy. This might appear surprising however, if one may look more closely, the scene reflects the innocence of a child. Probably the poet has tried to make a point that our happiness lies in other's happiness. The whole thought makes Larkin happy and he wonders about the mystiques of universe and human life.

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