**Forgive My Guilt -**Literature Notes

**Please note that the information given on this poem is not meant to replace any material given in the classroom setting. It is a very BASIC giude to enable a literal understanding of the poem. Metaphorical interpretations should be sought in the classroom.**

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| **The physical structure of this poem has been altered from the original layout in the text.**  Not always sure what things called sins may be, I am sure of one sin I have done. It was years ago, and I was a boy, I lay in the 1.frost flowers with a gun, 2.the air ran blue as the flowers; I held my breath, 2.two birds on golden legs slim as dream things 2.ran like quick silver on the1.golden sand, my gun went off, they ran with broken wings into the sea, I ran to fetch them in, but they swam with their heads high out to sea, They cried like two sorrowful high flutes, With 1.jagged ivory bones where wings should be. For days I heard them when I walked that headland, crying out to their kind 4.in the blue, The other plovers were going over south on silver wings leaving edthese broken two. The cries went out one day; but I still hear them over all the sounds of sorrow 5.in war or peace I ever have heard, time cannot 6.drownthem, 1.Those slender flutes of sorrow never cease, 3.Two airy things forever denied the air! I never knew how their lives at last were split, but I have hoped for years all that is wild, Airy, and beautiful will forgive my guilt.  Coffin, R.P.T. 'Forgive My Guilt' in A World of Prose. Edited by Mark McWatt and Hazel Simmonds McDonald. Pearson Education Ltd, 2005. | **This is the OPINION of one individual, which might not coincide with the views of others.**  LITERAL MEANING An adult is reminiscing about a traumatic childhood experience. The persona went hunting and shot two birds, [plovers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plover). He suffers extreme guilt about this action in adulthood. The poem describes the event, the actions of the bird, how he reacts, and, by the last line, asks the birds to forgive his guilt.  Picture  LITERARY DEVICES 1.METAPHOR   * Line 4: The nature of frost is that it covers everything in its path, therefore, when the flowers are compared to frost, it implies that there were a lot of flowers, enough to hide the boy from the birds. |

* Line 8: The sand is being compared to gold, the colour. It is emphasizing how beautiful the setting was.
* Line 12: This metaphor emphasizes the injuries that the birds sustained. The bones are compared to jagged ivory, which is a direct contrast to the smooth feathers that existed before the injury.
* Lines 20-21: The birds are compared to a flute, an instrument that plays beautiful music. This emphasizes the sadness that is related to their death.

2. SIMILE

* Line 5: The air and the flowers are being compared, both are blue.
* Lines 6-7: This simile offers a beautiful visual image of the birds. Dreams are beautiful, and the birds are compared to this.
* Line 7: The speed of the birds is being highlighted, while they were dying.  
    
  MOOD/ ATMOSPHERE  
  The [mood](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html) of the poem is nostalgia and guilt.   
    
  TONE  
  The [tone](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html) of the poem is sad. The poet's response to his guilt is sadness.  
    
  THEMATIC CATEGORY  
  Death, childhood experiences, nature, guilt, loss of innocence, desire/dreams.