

W. H. Auden

Twelve Songs: IX

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood.
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

April 1936

Instructor's Note: W. H. Auden was a constant revisionist. As a result, the above poem appears in more than one version in many anthologies. Most often it is referred to as "Funeral Song" or "Funeral Blues" or even "Stop all the Clocks." Auden himself at one time used it as the opening verse to a two-part poem titled: "Two Songs for Hedli Anderson"—a work envisioned as ballads for a cabaret singer in the Thirties. In the above case, the poem is part nine of a longer envisioned work titled: "Twelve Songs" from the book *W. H. Auden: Collected Poems*, edited by Edward Mendelson. The MLA citation is supplied below.

For consistency sake, **if you chose option two on your list of topics, introduce** the poem as "Twelve Songs: IX" and be prepared for critics discussing it in slightly different fashions. For the remainder of your paper, call it "Stop All the Clocks." If necessary, check with me about the approaches you take your discussion.

Remember, when studying poetry, the common goal is to examine the poem itself and ignore the poet's intentions. Discover first what you see in the work, then research the various opinions by critics. These opinions, of course, can be used to back up your observations. You can, as well, discuss the poet's own commentaries, afterwards, as secondary defense.

Auden, W. H. "Twelve Songs: IX." *W. H. Auden: Collected Poems*. Ed. Edward Mendelson. New York: The Modern Library, 2007. Print.