

## Stars



## POEM TEXT

- 1 Alone in the night
- 2 On a dark hill
- 3 With pines around me
- 4 Spicy and still,
- 5 And a heaven full of stars
- 6 Over my head,
- 7 White and topaz
- 8 And misty red;
- 9 Myriads with beating
- 10 Hearts of fire
- 11 That aeons
- 12 Cannot vex or tire;
- 13 Up the dome of heaven
- 14 Like a great hill,
- 15 I watch them marching
- 16 Stately and still,
- 17 And I know that I
- 18 Am honored to be
- 19 Witness
- 20 Of so much majesty.



## THEMES



## THE GRANDEUR OF NATURE

“Stars” praises the staggering majesty of the natural world. The speaker, sitting alone on a hill at night, is mesmerized by the countless stars in the sky above. The speaker is struck not only by the beauty of these celestial bodies, but also by their constancy—the way that their “Hearts of fire” never stop “beating.” The peaceful steadiness of these magnificent stars fills the speaker with gratitude; they consider themselves lucky to simply bear “witness” to nature’s grandeur.

The natural world of the poem is one filled with sensuous beauty. The speaker calls the surrounding pine trees “spicy” (a reference to their sharp scent), for example, and deems the night sky “a heaven full of stars.” The stars themselves are “White and topaz / And misty red,” a description that evokes a dark sky dotted with vivid colors and gems. That this immense sky hangs “over [the speaker’s] head,” meanwhile, adds to the poem’s sense of awe and wonder; there’s an entire whole world of color, beauty, and fire far above the earth and human beings, with which the speaker is utterly enthralled.

To the speaker, the stars aren’t simply beautiful: they’re also a reminder of the enduring nature of the cosmos. The speaker says that “aeons” (that is, countless years) “Cannot vex” (annoy) “or tire” these stars. In other words, nothing can stop the stars from shining in the sky; their “Hearts of fire” will beat forever. The observation that the stars cannot be annoyed or made weary might also suggest what drove the speaker to this “dark hill” in the middle of night to begin with. The speaker, perhaps, needed to be reminded of something bigger and more abiding than themselves—and found that reminder in the stars’ tranquility. That these stars are “marching” further suggests a sense of order and steadiness that the speaker finds comforting. Maybe part of the reason the stars are so comforting to the speaker, then, is because they put the small, fleeting nature of human troubles into perspective.

In any case, the speaker feels “honored to be / Witness / Of so much majesty.” The speaker realizes how lucky they are just to get to sit there and perceive the splendor of the night sky. Ending on this note suggests that the speaker feels entirely at peace at this moment, surrounded by the tranquil magnificence of nature.

## Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-20



## SUMMARY

I'm by myself at night on a shadowy slope, surrounded by coniferous trees, tangy and motionless.

Above me is a sky loaded with stars, which are white and pale blue and hazy red in color.

These countless stars have pulsing, fiery hearts that no amount of time could make irritable or weary.

Across the vaulted roof of the cosmos like a huge mound, I see them proceeding, dignified and calm.

And I'm aware that I'm so lucky to get to observe such magnificence.



## LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

## LINES 1-4

*Alone in the night  
On a dark hill  
With pines around me  
Spicy and still,*

The poem opens with clear and simple **imagery**: the speaker is "Alone in the night / On a dark hill." Already, the sparseness of the language leaves a lot to the reader's imagination. The speaker doesn't explain *why* they're alone outside at night—whether they're lonely, sad, lost, scared, or simply reveling in the quiet.

At the same time, smooth /n/ and /l/ **consonance** ("Alone," "in," "night," "On," "hill") infuses the opening lines with a feeling of calm and contemplation. Lines 3 and 4 offer more details about the poem's **setting**:

*With pines around me  
Spicy and still,*

Describing the pines, the speaker doesn't sound scared or lost; for instance, these pines aren't "looming." In fact, the /s/ **alliteration** ("Spicy," "still") sounds playful, and "Spicy" suggests an appreciation of the pine's strong fragrance, which the speaker can almost taste. In other words, the speaker seems to be enjoying the "still[ness]" of the natural world, or at least admiring it.

## LINES 5-8

*And a heaven full of stars  
Over my head,  
White and topaz  
And misty red;*

In the second stanza, the speaker begins to describe the poem's central subject: "a heaven full of stars." These stars contrast with the "dark hill" on which the speaker sits, emanating "White and topaz / And misty red" light.

Again, the **imagery** is clear and concise; the speaker doesn't ramble on about the beauty of the stars, but provides enough description to help the reader see what they're seeing. "White and topaz / And misty red" is more evocative than, say, "White, yellow, and red." The specificity of "topaz" suggests the gleam of a precious stone. (Topaz can have a range of colors; the speaker is most likely referring to yellow, also a common color for starlight.) The word "misty" suggests that some stars are so distant that the speaker can hardly make out their color.

The /z/ **consonance** in "stars" and "topaz" creates a **slant end rhyme** between lines 5 and 7, adding even more musicality to the stanza. This musicality helps evoke the speaker's awe as they stare at the heavens, taking in the glory of the stars.

Notice, too, how white space (the blank area surrounding the text) seems like an active presence in this poem. The brevity of the lines compared to the field of white space seems to mirror the smallness of the speaker in relation to the heavens.

## LINES 9-12

*Myriads with beating  
Hearts of fire  
That aeons  
Cannot vex or tire;*

The speaker expands on their description of the stars, saying that there are "Myriads" (a countless number) of them, all with "beating / Hearts of fire." This **metaphor** compares the burning core of a star to a "Heart," which "beat[s]" blood through the body and keeps it alive.

Of course, the word "Heart" itself is often used metaphorically, to describe the seat of love and emotions rather than just an anatomical organ. It's as if the speaker believes that all this beautiful light in the sky comes from something similar to human passion—or that human passion (including their own) burns with the brilliance of the stars.

The speaker goes on to say that, unlike humans, the "Hearts" of stars can't be "vex[ed] or tire[d]" by "aeons"—that is, any number of passing years. No matter how fiery stars may be, they are immune to the things that trouble human hearts. The speaker may be hinting that they're out here staring at the sky because they themselves are "vex[ed]" and/or "tire[d]." The stars may offer the speaker comfort because they remind the speaker that earthly troubles are small and trivial compared to the grandeur of the cosmos.

## LINES 13-16

*Up the dome of heaven  
Like a great hill,  
I watch them marching  
Stately and still,*

The speaker compares "the dome" (or half-sphere) of the night sky to "a great hill." This **simile** echoes the description of the speaker alone on "a dark hill" in the first stanza. In a way, the speaker on their hill and the stars in their "dome" seem to mirror each other, suggesting that the speaker feels part of nature rather than separate from it.

The speaker **personifies** the stars, saying that they are "marching [...] Up the dome of heaven," as if the stars are watchmen or sentinels proceeding to their positions in the night sky. The word "marching" suggests a sense of orderliness, as if the stars have somewhere important to be. The night sky isn't random but purposeful. Meanwhile, "dome" and "heaven" evoke the speaker's mood of quiet reverence (temples and houses of worship often have domes).

The phrase "Stately and still" refers to the stars but could also

apply to the speaker; once again, the speaker and the stars seem more similar than different. The speaker feels calm and uplifted in the presence of such beauty and majesty. The /st/ [alliteration](#) in "Stately and still" also mirrors the /s/ alliteration in "Spicy and still" at the beginning of the poem. The [repetition](#) of "still" suggests the tranquility not only of this natural scene but also of the speaker observing it. Nature, it seems, has the ability to sweep people up in its magnificence.

### LINES 17-20

*And I know that I  
Am honored to be  
Witness  
Of so much majesty.*

The speaker concludes the poem with a simple yet profound realization: that they are "honored to be / Witness / Of so much majesty." This plainly stated conclusion is in keeping with the poem's spare descriptions and straightforward language. The speaker isn't intellectualizing their relationship to nature or trying to make some grand statement about the world and humanity. They're merely observing how good it feels to be sitting under the stars, and how "Witness[ing]" nature's grandeur gives them a sense of peace.

The poem's musicality continues to heighten its effect. Smooth /n/ and crisp /t/ [consonance](#) ("know," "honored," "Witness," "majesty") help evoke the beauty of the night—of the speaker's ordinary, yet acute encounter with the natural world. The [alliteration](#) of /m/ sounds in "much majesty" adds intensity to the poem's final syllables, driving home the impact of all this grandeur.

Notice, too, how the poet gives the word "Witness" its own line. This choice disrupts the poem's rhythm and draws special attention, both sonically and visually, to an important word. It suggests that "Witness[ing]"—observing and acknowledging—the majesty of nature is of central importance to the poem.

description, it is still surprising. The word "spicy," for instance, stands out; it's a fairly ordinary word, yet a unique way to describe the scent of pine trees. This one word gives the poem an added feeling of intimacy and relevance: the poem feels modern because the language is at once direct and whimsical.

In the second stanza, the speaker describes "a heaven full of stars" that are "White and topaz / And misty red." Once again, the imagery is clear and simple: the speaker is just describing colors. Yet the poet keeps things interesting by being inventive in the way colors are described. So rather than "white, blue, and red," the poem uses the word "topaz," which is suggestive of the glittering surface of a precious stone, and "misty" red, which adds a layer of specificity.

The speaker describes the stars again in stanza 4, saying:

Up the dome of heaven  
Like a great hill,  
I watch them marching  
Stately and still,

The imagery in this stanza mirrors the imagery in the first stanza; where the speaker was the one situated on a "dark hill" at the beginning of the poem, they are now imagining that the sky is a "great hill" on which the stars are "marching." The syntax (or word order) in the last two lines of the stanza also obscures what or who "Stately and still" is describing: the stars or the speaker. This allows the phrase to be applicable to both subjects, so that it once again seems as if the speaker is mirroring the heavens, instilled with the dignity and calmness of distant stars.

At first glance, the words "marching" and "still" also seem to contradict each other—are the stars marching across the sky, or are they staying in place? The word "still," though, may, in this case, be understood to refer to more of an emotional stillness or tranquility.

#### Where Imagery appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-4:** "Alone in the night / On a dark hill / With pines around me / Spicy and still,"
- **Lines 5-8:** "And a heaven full of stars / Over my head, / White and topaz / And misty red;"
- **Lines 13-16:** "Up the dome of heaven / Like a great hill, / I watch them marching / Stately and still,"

### METAPHOR

The poem contains several [metaphors](#) and [similes](#). Line 7, for example, describes certain stars as "topaz," a metaphor that evokes both their color (probably yellow) and their jewel-like sparkle.

The following stanza then presents a striking metaphor: the speaker says that the "Myriads" (vast number) of stars have



## POETIC DEVICES

### IMAGERY

The poem is filled with simple yet evocative [imagery](#). In the first stanza, for instance, the speaker paints a very clear picture of themselves:

Alone in the night  
On a dark hill  
With pines around me  
Spicy and still,

There is no unnecessary information here; the scene is distilled to its most essential parts. And yet, despite the simplicity of the

"beating / Hearts of fire." There's a literal component to this [image](#), as stars really do have hot, burning cores. But "Heart" also suggests something living, something that feels. Describing the stars as having "beating / Hearts" seems to imply that they're filled with passion—like the speaker herself! Yet these stars never grow "vex[ed] or "tire[d]"; they burn with the same strength through countless years. The speaker clearly admires, and may wish to emulate, their resilience.

The poem also uses a simile along with other [figurative language](#) in the fourth stanza:

Up the dome of heaven  
Like a great hill,  
I watch them marching  
Stately and still,

The simile in lines 13-14 compares heaven (which here just means the sky, and which the speaker describes as a "dome," or half-sphere) to a "great hill." That the stars are moving "Up" this hill suggests a sense of purpose, as if they're headed somewhere important. In fact, the stars are [personified](#) as "Marching," like a "Stately" army or parade. Yet, in a [paradox](#), they also seem serenely "still." This imagery highlights the apparent orderliness of the night sky, which comforts the speaker by putting their own life in perspective. If each star has a specific, dignified place in the cosmos, perhaps the speaker does too.

#### Where Metaphor appears in the poem:

- **Line 7:** "topaz"
- **Lines 9-12:** "Myriads with beating / Hearts of fire / That aeons / Cannot vex or tire;"
- **Lines 13-16:** "Up the dome of heaven / Like a great hill, / I watch them marching / Stately and still,"

## CONSONANCE

[Consonance](#) adds rhythm, musicality, and intensity to the poem. In the first stanza, for example, smooth /n/ and /l/ consonance helps conjure a mood of serene contemplation:

Alone in the night  
On a dark hill  
With pines around me  
Spicy and still,

These /n/ and /l/ sounds carry over to the second stanza ("heaven," "full") before giving way to /s/ and /t/ sounds ("stars," "White," "topaz," "misty"). These sounds help evoke the crispness of night air and glittering stars.

In stanza 3, /r/, /t/, and /k/ consonance echoes the lively, fiery "Hearts" of the stars:

Myriads with beating  
Hearts of fire  
That aeons  
Cannot vex or tire;

The more vigorous /r/ and /t/ sounds are balanced out by the smooth /n/ sounds in "aeons" and "Cannot." This is fitting, as the speaker seems to almost be looking for a way to balance having a "beating / Heart" with the ability to be "Stately and still." The stars manage this: they are literally hot orbs of burning gases, yet they never "vex"—that is, get upset—or "tire." The speaker isn't just admiring nature's incredible beauty; they are also searching for inspiration, which they find in the tranquility and changelessness of the stars.

#### Where Consonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "Alone," "night"
- **Line 2:** "On," "hill"
- **Line 3:** "pines," "around"
- **Line 4:** "still"
- **Line 5:** "heaven," "full," "stars"
- **Line 7:** "White," "topaz"
- **Line 8:** "misty"
- **Line 9:** "Myriads," "beating"
- **Line 10:** "Hearts," "fire"
- **Line 11:** "aeons"
- **Line 12:** "Cannot," "vex," "tire"
- **Line 14:** "great"
- **Line 15:** "watch"
- **Line 16:** "Stately," "still"
- **Line 17:** "And," "know"
- **Line 18:** "honored"
- **Line 19:** "Witness"
- **Line 20:** "majesty"

## ALLITERATION

Like [consonance](#), [alliteration](#) adds musicality and rhythm to the poem and also draws attention to certain word combinations. In line 4, for example, the speaker describes the pine trees as "Spicy and still." The sudden /s/ alliteration, after the smooth /n/ and /l/ consonance of the previous lines, adds a jolt of interest, much like the "spicy" smell of the pines.

Similar /st/ alliteration appears in the fourth stanza, in the phrase "Stately and still." This seems like a purposeful play on the earlier phrase, with the word "Stately" replacing "Spicy." Here, the additional /t/ sound makes the phrase stand out sharply. The pair of /st/ words is even more closely aligned than the earlier /s/ and /st/ pair—fittingly enough, since these lines describe stars "marching" in a kind of alignment.

The last two words of the poem ("much majesty") alliterate as well, lending extra emphasis to the serene conclusion.

**Where Alliteration appears in the poem:**

- **Line 4:** "Spicy," "still"
- **Line 5:** "heaven"
- **Line 6:** "head"
- **Line 13:** "heaven"
- **Line 14:** "hill"
- **Line 16:** "Stately," "still"
- **Line 20:** "much," "majesty"

**ASSONANCE**

[Assonance](#), like [consonance](#) and [alliteration](#), adds musicality and emphasis to the verse. For example, drawn-out, chiming /i/ vowels in the first stanza ("night," "pines," "Spicy") add to the gentle lyricism of this poem about natural beauty.

In the second stanza, open, breathy /eh/ sounds ("heaven," "head") help evoke the speaker's awe as they gaze at the skies. In the fourth stanza, /ay/ assonance and /t/ consonance ("great," "Stately") create an [internal rhyme](#), crisply accentuating the image of the "Marching" stars.

The poem's many [end rhymes](#) also rely on assonance, and are discussed in the Rhyme Scheme section of this guide.

**Where Assonance appears in the poem:**

- **Line 1:** "night"
- **Line 3:** "pines"
- **Line 4:** "Spicy"
- **Line 5:** "heaven"
- **Line 6:** "head"
- **Line 14:** "great"
- **Line 16:** "Stately"

**ENJAMBMENT**

Most of the poem's lines are [enjambéd](#). As a result, they flow smoothly into one another and create a serene, gentle rhythm that matches the speaker's peaceful tone. Take a look at the first stanza:

Alone in the night  
On a dark hill  
With pines around me  
Spicy and still,

Notice how enjambment *supports* the poem's syntax rather than working against it. In other words, the line breaks occur in places that sound natural, rather than in places that would complicate the poem's meaning (for instance, a line break after the word "dark" above would feel quite jarring and fragmented). This adds to the overall simplicity and smoothness of the poem, which, after all, expresses a fairly straightforward thought: that nature is beautiful and the speaker is lucky to witness it.

The poem does use some [end-stopped lines](#), however. Most of these fall at the ends of stanzas, emphasizing the pause between one stanza and the next. Twice, they fall in mid-stanza: in lines 6 and 14. The commas at the ends of these lines slow down the verse, as if giving readers more time to appreciate the "heaven[ly]" [imagery](#).

Notice how the fourth and fifth stanzas flow very differently from one another, thanks in part to the end stops in stanza four:

Up the dome of heaven  
Like a great hill,  
I watch them marching  
Stately and still,

The comma after "hill" draws out this stanza's suspenseful syntax; the subject and main verb don't arrive until line 15 ("I watch them marching"). By contrast, stanza five is very direct:

And I know that I  
Am honored to be  
Witness  
Of so much majesty.

Here, enjambment supports the straightforward syntax and makes that final period more emphatic by contrast. These effects end the poem on a resonant note, driving home the speaker's appreciation of the stars.

**Where Enjambment appears in the poem:**

- **Lines 1-2:** "night / On"
- **Lines 2-3:** "hill / With"
- **Lines 3-4:** "me / Spicy"
- **Lines 5-6:** "stars / Over"
- **Lines 7-8:** "topaz / And"
- **Lines 9-10:** "beating / Hearts"
- **Lines 10-11:** "fire / That"
- **Lines 11-12:** "aeons / Cannot"
- **Lines 13-14:** "heaven / Like"
- **Lines 15-16:** "marching / Stately"
- **Lines 17-18:** "I / Am"
- **Lines 18-20:** "be / Witness / Of"

**VOCABULARY**

**Topaz** (Line 7) - A gemstone, often of a yellowish or pale blue color.

**Myriads** (Line 9) - A countless number; multitudes.

**Aeons** (Line 11) - A countless number of years.

**Vex** (Line 12) - Annoy or anger.

**Dome** (Line 13) - A rounded vault forming the roof of a

building, shaped like the hollow upper half of a sphere.

**Stately** (Line 16) - Dignified; majestic.



## FORM, METER, & RHYME

### FORM

The poem is made up of five short quatrains, or four-line stanzas. The lines are only about as long as the [quatrains](#) are tall, an effect that emphasizes the poem's white space (the vacant area around the poem's text). The smallness of the text against the white space helps evoke stars sprinkled against the emptiness of the night sky. It also might suggest the speaker's own smallness compared to the surrounding pines and the "dome" of stars above. The brevity of the poem emphasizes the idea that in the grand scheme of things, the speaker's problems and cares are unimportant; nature's grandeur puts the speaker's brief life into perspective.

### METER

"Stars" is written in a loose accentual meter. Accentual meter is defined by the number of **stressed beats** per line, regardless of *syllable* count. Here, most lines contain two strong beats. Look at the first two stanzas, for example:

Alone in the **night**  
 On a **dark hill**  
 With **pin**es around me  
**Spicy** and **still**,  
 And a **heaven** full of stars  
 Over my **head**,  
**White** and **topaz**  
 And **misty red**;

The lines range from four to seven syllables, but most contain two strong beats. The exception is line 5, which, along with lines 11-12, and lines 19-20, break the pattern. Lines 11 and 19 contain one strong beat apiece ("That **aeons**"; "**Witness**"). This draws extra attention to the words "aeons" and "Witness" ("Witness" even gets its own line!). Stressing "aeons" suggests how long and dramatic these time periods are. Stressing "Witness" underscores what the speaker thinks they're here on earth to do: bear "witness" to beauty.

Lines 5, 12, and 20, meanwhile, contain three or four apiece ("And a **heaven** full of stars"; "**Cannot vex** or **tire**"; "**Of so much majesty**"). These disruptions add sonic interest to the poem.

Accentual meter is often found in folk verse and children's poetry, and Teasdale may be using it to invoke that tradition. There's a lullaby-like or nursery-rhyme quality to "Stars," though the poem is written for adults. The short, restrained lines reflect the speaker's quiet contemplation and sense of smallness compared to the night sky.

### RHYME SCHEME

The [rhyme scheme](#) for each [stanza](#) is ABCB. In other words, even lines rhyme and odd lines don't. This scheme is a little more relaxed than an ABAB structure, while still being highly musical.

Though all the [end rhymes](#) associated with the rhyme scheme are perfect (meaning that they rhyme exactly—"hill"/"still," "head"/"red," etc.), the poem also contains an extra imperfect rhyme across lines 5 and 7. The similar vowel sounds and /z/ [consonance](#) in "stars" and "topaz" makes these words loosely rhyme, so that the stanza seems to have two end rhymes instead of one. The extra musicality helps evoke the speaker's enchantment with the sparkling night sky.



## SPEAKER

The speaker of "Stars" is sitting "Alone in the night / On a dark hill." They are appreciating the "still[ness]" and "Spicy" smell of the pine trees around them, while gazing up into "a heaven full of stars." These stars captivate the speaker with their glittering beauty, their "Hearts of fire" that never "vex" (get upset) or "tire" out.

By sitting outside in nature, the speaker may hope to gain some perspective on their own, much shorter life, which is fueled by a human heart that *does* get upset and tired. Perhaps the speaker felt irritable and weary before coming out here and comparing themselves to the stars. Gazing up at "heaven," however, they are drawn to the stars' "Stately" presence and feel lucky even to "Witness" such splendor. Overall, then, the speaker's [tone](#) is reverent and thankful.



## SETTING

The poem takes place outside at night. The speaker is situated "On a dark hill," surrounded by the tangy fragrance of "pine" trees. The night is quiet and still, and the sky is lit by countless "White," "topaz" (jewel-like, probably bluish), and "misty red" stars. These stars seem to be "marching," like a vast and "Stately" army, across the "dome" (or half-sphere) "of heaven."

The poem reveals no other details of the speaker's surroundings. Rather, it focuses purely on the magnificent view above—allowing the reader to feel swept up, alongside the speaker, in the "majesty" of the night sky.



## CONTEXT

### LITERARY CONTEXT

Sara Teasdale (1884-1933) was a popular and celebrated [lyric](#) poet of the early 20th century. Her 1917 collection, *Love Songs*,

won the inaugural Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, and throughout her career she was celebrated for the songlike quality of her poems as well as their specifically feminine perspective.

Her work is now often overlooked in discussions of important 20th-century poetry, partly because it lacks the formal experimentation associated with [Modernism](#). But her distinctive lyrics—with their distilled [imagery](#) and emotional potency—have appealed to, and influenced, many later writers, including Amy Lowell, Elinor Wylie, Louise Bogan, John Berryman, and Sylvia Plath. With its focus on intimate feelings about beauty, romance, loneliness, and death, her work is often considered a precursor of [Confessionalism](#).

Teasdale herself was influenced by the classic Greek poets—particularly Sappho. Like Sappho, Teasdale was uninterested in the longer forms taken up by the great male poets of her time. Her poems are terse, with lines often consisting of only a few stresses. She was also influenced by other prominent women poets, such as Emily Dickinson and Christina Rossetti, but her poetry was more limited in scope. Although one of her best-remembered poems is an anti-war poem ("[There Will Come Soft Rains](#)"), most of her work adhered to subjects that women were expected to write about: love and its attendant emotions.

"Stars" was published in Teasdale's 1926 collection, *Flame and Shadow*. The collection deals primarily with the passions of romantic love (the stars' "Hearts of fire" in this poem seem to correspond to the "Flame" in the book's title), as well as love's "Shadow": loneliness, sadness, and despair. While this poem doesn't explicitly address love or its absence, the speaker's contemplation of the timeless cosmos while sitting alone at night is suggestive of the book's broader themes.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Teasdale spent her formative years in poor physical health and was raised by her affluent family to see herself as helpless and delicate. She never outgrew this belief, and her adult years were punctuated by mental and physical illness. While many women of the "Roaring Twenties" were joining the workforce and expanding their independence, Teasdale remained entrenched in the fear that she was too fragile to live on her own.

She didn't gain independence from her family until she married, by which time she was 30 years old and deeply lacking in self-esteem. Though many of her poems, like "Stars," praise the splendor of the natural world and celebrate the speaker's place in it, she herself was unable to hold onto these feelings for very long, even at the height of her career.

*Flame and Shadow* was published three years before Teasdale's divorce from her husband, Ernst Filsinger. While her literary

career was reaching its peak—with many critics lauding her artistic and intellectual development in her later books—her personal life was falling apart. The years leading up to her divorce were painful ones for Teasdale, as she dealt with mental illness and Filsinger's frequent work-related absences. Her intense loneliness, coupled with her continued health issues, culminated in her death by suicide in 1933.

While this poem doesn't overtly refer to historical or personal events in Teasdale's life, it's not a stretch to imagine that this lonely speaker—who temporarily finds a sense of peace and perspective while gazing at the stars—could have been Teasdale herself.



## MORE RESOURCES

### EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- [The Lyric Poem](#) — An introduction to lyric poetry from the Academy of American Poets. (<https://poets.org/glossary/lyric-poetry>)
- [A Reading of the Poem](#) — Hear the poem read aloud. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLG-QnMbUUU>)
- [More on the Author](#) — Another summary of Teasdale's life and works, via Britannica. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sara-Teasdale>)
- [Nature Poetry](#) — The Academy of American Poets discusses the tradition of poets writing about nature. (<https://poets.org/glossary/nature-poetry>)
- [Biography and Poems](#) — A biography and additional Sara Teasdale poems from the Poetry Foundation. (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/sara-teasdale>)

### LITCHARTS ON OTHER SARA TEASDALE POEMS

- [There Will Come Soft Rains](#)



## HOW TO CITE

### MLA

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### CHICAGO MANUAL

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