CAPITOLO

11

Innocence and Experience: William Blake

"Without Contraries is no progression." — William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (c. 1790)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe Britain in the 1790s — the war with France, the fear of revolution, London's poor and the climbing boys — and explain what Romanticism was.
2. I can explain how Blake made his illuminated books and what the "two contrary states" of the *Songs* are.
3. I can analyse "The Lamb", "The Tyger", "London" and "The Chimney Sweeper", comparing paired poems and reading their symbols.
4. I can use rhetorical, negative and emphatic questions, *-ever* words and *no matter*.
5. I can conduct an interview with open and follow-up questions and write a source-based essay that quotes and names its sources.
6. I can compare Blake with the Italian Romantic debate and link his work to the chemistry of etching and to the history of occupational medicine.

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English 4 · Parte IV · The Romantic Age · versione 1.0
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In the autumn of 1789, a few months after the fall of the Bastille, a London engraver finished a small book that no printer had printed and no bookseller had ordered. He had written the poems, drawn the pictures, etched words and pictures together on copper, printed the pages on his own press and coloured each one by hand with his wife. It was called *Songs of Innocence*, and it looked like a book of hymns for children. Five years later, in a city at war and afraid of revolution, he added a second set of songs, darker and angrier, and called the whole book *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. The engraver was William Blake.

Almost nobody read Blake in his lifetime. Today “The Tyger” is one of the most quoted poems in the language, and his lines about chimney sweeps, soldiers and “mind-forg’d manacles” are read as some of the first great protests against the cruelty of the modern city. This chapter opens Part IV, the Romantic age: it places Blake in the London of the 1790s, explains what **Romanticism** was, reads four of his songs, and links his strange printing method to chemistry and his chimney sweeps to the history of medicine.

11.1 History and Society: Britain in the 1790s

Chapter 9 followed the three revolutions of the late eighteenth century — industrial, American and French — and the great British argument between Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine. This chapter looks at the decade that followed 1789 from inside London, where the hopes of the Revolution turned quickly into war, fear and hunger. Figura 11.1 sets Blake’s life against these events.

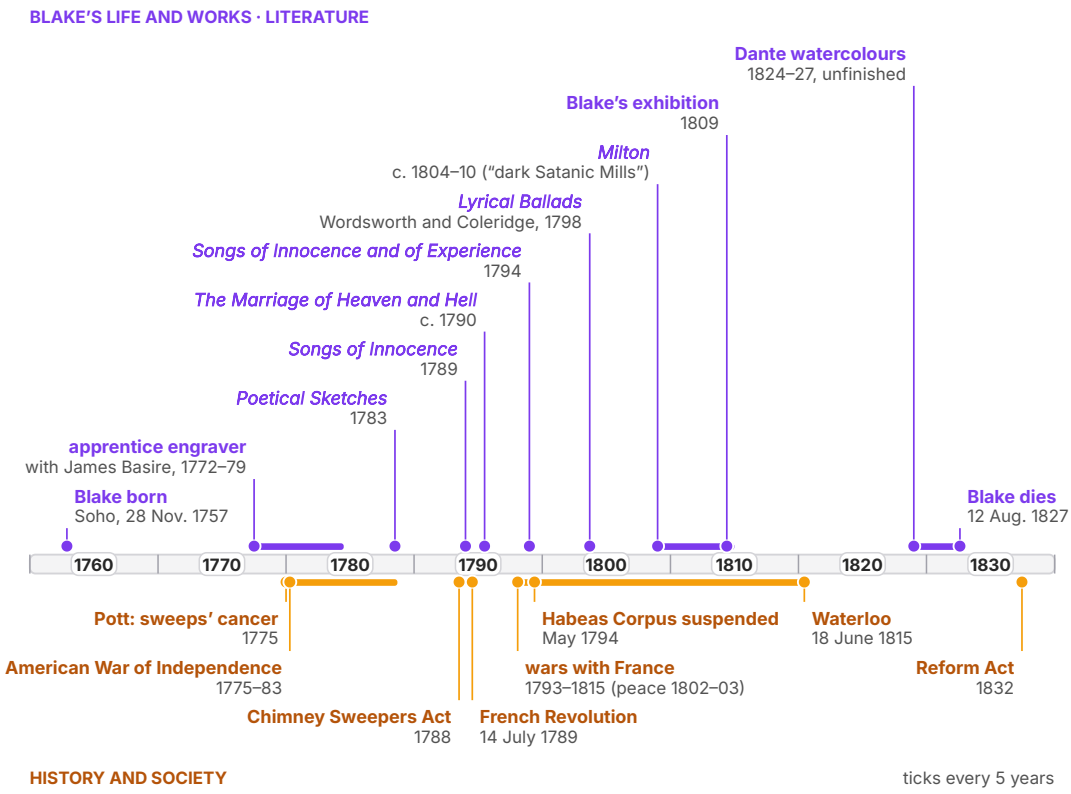


Figura 11.1 William Blake (1757–1827) and his age, on a proportional time axis (ticks every 5 years). Above, in violet: Blake's life and works, with *Lyrical Ballads* (chapter 12) for comparison; below, in amber: historical events. Dates of the illuminated books are those on their title pages or, with "c.", the approximate dates proposed by scholars.

11.1.1 A country at war, a government afraid

In 1789 many British readers welcomed the French Revolution as the start of a freer age. Small clubs of artisans and shopkeepers began to meet to discuss reform. The most famous, the **London Corresponding Society**, was founded in January 1792 by a shoemaker, Thomas Hardy; its members paid a penny a week and asked for a vote for every adult man and for a Parliament elected every year. Paine's *Rights of Man* sold in huge numbers in cheap editions. In 1792 the government answered with a royal proclamation against "seditious writings"; Paine was charged with **sedition** (Italian *sedizione*: words or writings meant to stir up rebellion against the state), fled to France and was found guilty in his absence in December 1792.

After the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793, France declared war on Britain on 1 February 1793. With one short peace (1802–03), the two countries were at war until Waterloo in 1815. In wartime, a reformer could easily look like a traitor. In May 1794 Parliament suspended

Habeas Corpus — the ancient legal guarantee that nobody can be kept in prison without being brought before a judge — so that suspects could be held without trial. Hardy and other leaders of the reform societies were tried for high treason later that year; London juries acquitted them, and crowds celebrated in the streets. In 1795, after a crowd attacked the king's coach on its way to Parliament, the "Two Acts" made it a serious crime to speak or write against the king, the government or the constitution and banned large political meetings without a magistrate's permission. Spies and informers reported on the clubs, and "loyalist" associations collected signatures for king and country.

Blake felt this pressure personally. His friends included radicals, and he engraved illustrations for the publisher Joseph Johnson, who published Paine's friends and Mary Wollstonecraft (chapter 9). In 1803 a soldier whom he had thrown out of his garden in Sussex accused him of cursing the king; Blake was tried for sedition at Chichester in January 1804 and acquitted.

11.1.2 London and its poor

London was the largest city in Europe: the first national census, in 1801, counted about a million people in the capital. Wealth was close to misery. A few streets from the elegant squares of the West End were crowded parishes such as St Giles, where families lived in single rooms. The war made life harder: bad harvests in 1794 and 1795 pushed up the price of bread, and there were food riots in many towns. Poor relief was organised by each parish, which ran a workhouse and often "apprenticed" orphans and poor children to masters who would take them off its hands.

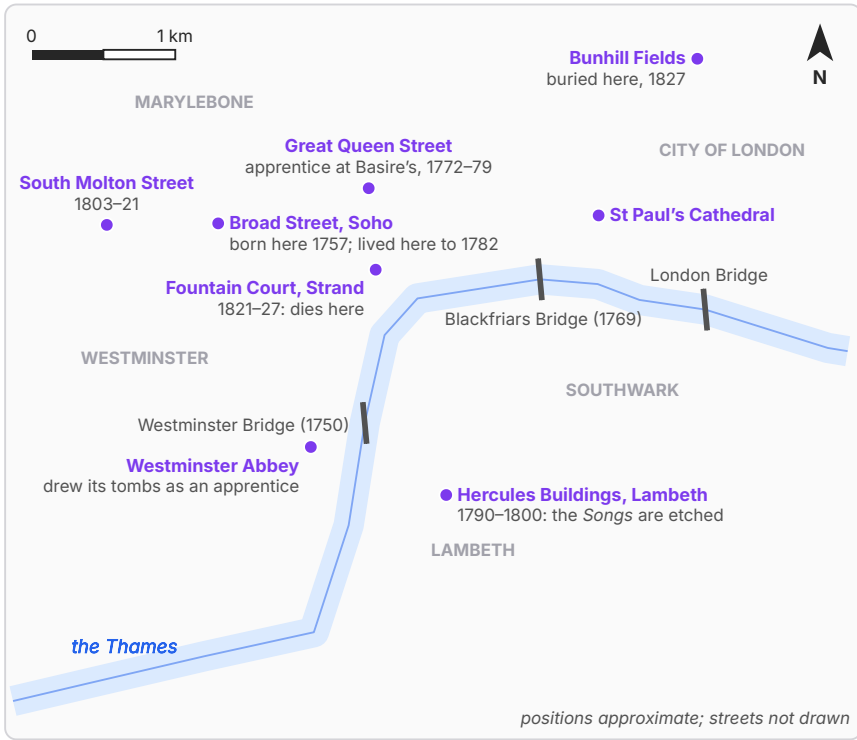


Figura 11.2 Blake's London. Violet: the places where Blake lived, studied, worked and was buried, with dates, and St Paul's, the scene of the two "Holy Thursday" poems; grey: districts. The Thames and the three bridges of the 1790s (Westminster, Blackfriars and old London Bridge) are drawn approximately; Felpham, in Sussex (1800–03), is off the map.

The most visible of these children were the **climbing boys**. Houses were heated with coal fires, and their narrow chimneys had to be swept regularly. A master sweep took small boys — sometimes girls — as apprentices, often from the parish or from parents who were paid for them, and sent them up inside the flues to brush the soot down. The smaller the child, the narrower the flue he could climb. The children walked the streets before dawn shouting their trade, "Sweep!", which in a small child's mouth became "'weep! 'weep!"; many were bruised, burned or suffocated, and slept on the soot bags. In 1775 the surgeon Percivall Pott described a cancer typical of sweeps (see Connections). The **Chimney Sweepers Act of 1788** said that no boy should be bound apprentice before the age of eight and that his parents had to agree; the master had to give him suitable clothes and lodging and let him go to church on Sundays. A clause to license master sweeps was rejected by the House of Lords, and the Act was hardly enforced: climbing boys were used for almost another century, until an Act of 1875 made the licensing of sweeps compulsory.

Charity also had a public face. From 1782 the children of London's charity schools, thousands of them in their uniforms, were marched every year to a service in St Paul's Cathedral. Blake wrote a poem about this scene for each half of his *Songs*, both called "Holy Thursday": in *Innocence* the children's singing rises "like a mighty wind"; in *Experience* the speaker asks, "Is this a holy thing to see / In a rich and fruitful land, / Babes reduced to misery...?"

11.1.3 A new way of feeling: Romanticism

The decades around 1800 saw a change in European taste so deep that historians give it a name of its own. **Romanticism** (Italian *Romanticismo*) was a movement in literature, art, music and thought, from about the 1780s to the 1830s, which put **imagination** above rules, **feeling** above calculation, **nature** above the town and the drawing room, and the **individual** — the rebel, the outcast, the visionary — above society. It found value in the **child**, who sees the world before custom has dulled it; in the **past**, especially the Middle Ages and the songs of ordinary people; and in the infinite, the mysterious and the sublime (chapter 10).

In many ways Romanticism reversed the **neoclassicism** of Pope and Johnson (chapter 5). Neoclassical writers imitated Greek and Roman models, respected decorum and wrote about general human nature in polished heroic couplets. Romantic writers wanted originality, wrote about their own experience, mixed high and low, and preferred simple song forms or free-flowing blank verse. The change did not come from nowhere: the cult of **sensibility** (chapter 8), the taste for the sublime and the Gothic (chapter 10) and Rousseau's ideas about a natural education of the child (*Émile*, 1762) had prepared it.

Two warnings about the word. First, the English poets never called themselves "Romantics": the label came from German critics around 1800 and was applied to English literature by later historians. Second, it is usual to speak of **two generations** of English Romantic poets — Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge, born between 1757 and 1772, and Byron, Shelley and Keats, born between 1788 and 1795 (chapters 12 and 13) — but this is a teaching convenience, not a group the poets formed. Blake, in particular, belonged to no group at all.

DA RICORDARE

Romanticism (c. 1780s–1830s): imagination, feeling, nature, the individual, childhood, the past and the infinite, against the rules, reason and decorum of neoclassicism. A later label; "two generations" of English poets is a teaching convenience. Blake (1757–1827) is the oldest of them and fits no group.

11.2 Literature: William Blake

11.2.1 Engraver, painter, poet

William Blake was born on 28 November 1757 in Broad Street, Soho, the son of a hosier (a seller of stockings and gloves). He never went to an ordinary school; at ten he was sent to a drawing school, and at fourteen, in 1772, he was apprenticed for seven years to the engraver James Basire. Basire sent him to draw the medieval tombs in Westminster Abbey, and Blake fell in love with Gothic art for life. He then studied at the new Royal Academy Schools (1779), where he quarrelled with the official taste of its president, Sir Joshua Reynolds. His first biographer, Alexander Gilchrist, tells that as a child Blake said he had seen a tree full of angels at Peckham Rye; all his life Blake spoke of his "visions" as real experiences.

In 1782 he married Catherine Boucher, the daughter of a market gardener, who signed the marriage register with a cross. Blake taught her to read and write, and she became his partner in the workshop: she helped him print, colour and stitch his books. Blake earned his living as a commercial engraver of other people's designs — for example, the plates of Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life* (1791) — and his own art and poetry brought him very little money. Friends paid for a small book of youthful poems, *Poetical Sketches* (1783), which was printed but never sold. He lived in Lambeth, south of the Thames, from 1790 to 1800, at Felpham in Sussex under the protection of the poet William Hayley from 1800 to 1803, and then again in London, where he died, poor and almost unknown, on 12 August 1827.

11.2.2 Illuminated printing

A normal book of Blake's time was made by several trades. A printer set the words in metal type; an engraver cut the pictures into separate copper plates as fine lines, which held the ink below the surface (a method called **intaglio**, from the Italian); a bookseller paid for and sold the result. Around 1788 Blake invented a way to do everything himself. He called it **illuminated printing**: words and pictures were drawn together on the same copper plate, printed together, and then coloured by hand with watercolour, like the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages. Because the colouring was done copy by copy, no two copies of a Blake book are the same.

The technique behind it is **relief etching** (Italian *acquaforte a rilievo*). Instead of cutting lines into the plate, Blake drew the design on the copper with a liquid that resists acid, then put the plate into an acid bath: the bare copper was eaten away and the design was left standing up, in relief, like the letters of a rubber stamp or a woodcut. Ink rolled or dabbed on the raised surface printed the design (Figura 11.3). Since a print is the mirror image of its plate, every word had to be written backwards on the copper. According to his friend J. T. Smith, Blake said that his dead brother Robert had shown him the method in a vision; in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

he joked that he printed “in the infernal method, by corrosives”, “melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid”. Modern printmakers and scholars have reconstructed his method by experiment, but some details — for example, exactly how he wrote in reverse — are still discussed.

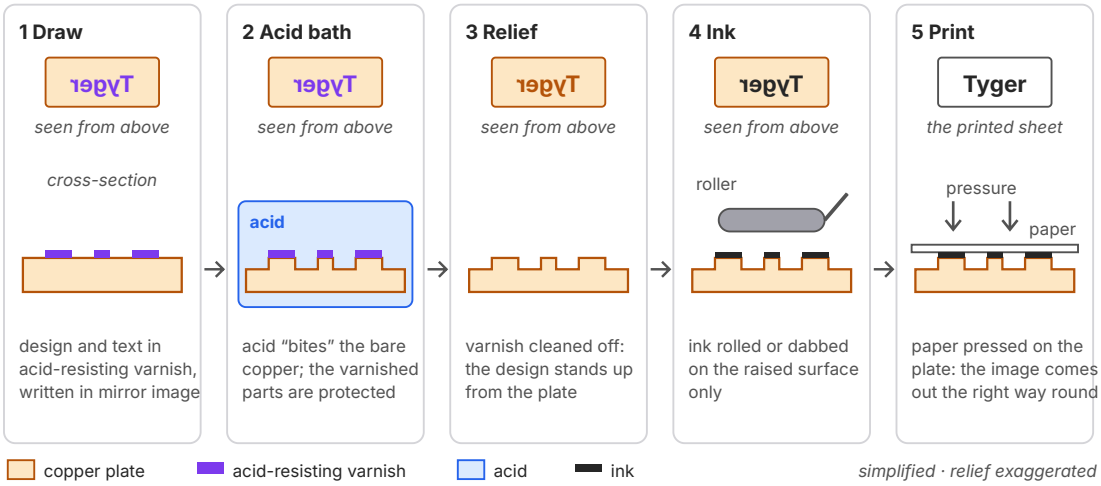


Figura 11.3 Relief etching, simplified. Each panel shows the plate from above and in cross-section. Because the print is a mirror image of the plate, the words are written backwards on the copper. The depth of the bitten areas is exaggerated; Blake’s exact materials and steps are partly reconstructed by modern experiment.

Blake produced all his major works in this way: *Songs of Innocence* (1789); *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (c. 1790), a book of paradoxes that says “Without Contraries is no progression”; and long “prophetic books” with his own mythology, from *America* (1793) to *Milton* (c. 1804–10) and *Jerusalem*. The preface to *Milton* contains the short lyric that asks whether Jerusalem was “builded here, / Among these dark Satanic Mills” — the source of the hymn “Jerusalem”. The method gave Blake complete freedom, but it was slow, and he printed very few copies, mostly for a small circle of friends and collectors.

11.2.3 *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*

Songs of Innocence (1789) imitates a popular kind of book, the collection of simple religious songs for children, such as Isaac Watts’s *Divine Songs* (1715). Its world is **pastoral**: shepherds and lambs, children playing on the green, mothers and nurses who watch over them, a God who is a kind father. In 1794 Blake added *Songs of Experience* and gave the combined book a title page that explains the design: *Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul*. In *Experience* the same world is seen by someone who knows suffering,

hypocrisy and power: parents who send children to work, a Church that blesses misery, a state that sends soldiers to die.

Many poems come in pairs. Some share a title — "Holy Thursday", "The Chimney Sweeper", "Nurse's Song", "Introduction" — and some answer each other under different titles, like "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" or "Infant Joy" and "Infant Sorrow". Neither state is simply right. Innocence is beautiful but can be blind, and the powerful exploit it; experience sees clearly but can become bitter and cruel. Blake's idea of "contraries" means that the soul needs both, and that a reader should read each song with its partner in mind. Blake himself moved a few poems from one section to the other in different copies.

11.2.4 The lyric and the symbol

The *Songs* are lyrics. A **lyric** (Italian *lirica*) is a short poem in which a single voice expresses thoughts and feelings; the name comes from the lyre, because the first lyrics were sung, and Blake is said to have sung his own songs to tunes he made up. But the voice of a Blake lyric is rarely Blake's own. The speaker may be a child, a sweep, a nurse or a "Bard": each poem is a small dramatic monologue, and the reader must ask, as with a *persona* (English 3), how much the speaker understands.

Blake's language is the simplest in this book — short words, ballad and hymn metres, repetition, questions — and it carries the most difficult meanings, because its main images work as symbols. A **symbol** (Italian *simbolo*) is a concrete thing that stands for something larger without a fixed, one-to-one meaning. In an **allegory** (English 3) each element translates into one idea; a symbol stays open. Blake's lamb suggests gentleness, childhood, the trusting soul and Christ, the "Lamb of God"; his tiger suggests energy, power, terror and perhaps the violence of revolution — and readers have never agreed on one meaning. Notice also Blake's spelling: *Tyger*, *sieze*, *thro'*, the ampersand *&*. It was old-fashioned or personal even in 1794, and good editions keep it.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «Blake era un poeta famoso ai suoi tempi.» → ✓ In vita fu conosciuto soprattutto come incisore, da pochi amici e collezionisti; la fama arrivò dopo la biografia di Gilchrist (1863).

✗ «*Tyger* è un errore di stampa.» → ✓ È la grafia scelta da Blake, già arcaica nel 1794: si conserva, come *sieze* e *thro'*.

✗ «Le *Songs of Innocence* sono poesie ingenue per bambini.» → ✓ Imitano la forma degli inni per l'infanzia, ma vanno lette insieme alle *Songs of Experience*: sono due "stati contrari" dell'anima, nessuno dei due è il punto di vista definitivo.

IN SINTESI

Innocence (1789)	Experience (1794)
pastoral world: green, lambs, shepherds	the city, winter, the “charter’d street”
protecting adults: mothers, nurses, God as father	adults who exploit: parents, priests, the king
trust, joy, play	fear, anger, hypocrisy, “mind-forg’d manacles”
questions are answered	questions stay open
typical speaker: a child	typical speaker: the Bard, or a child who understands

11.3 Texts: The Lamb, the Tyger and the City

Blake’s spelling, capitals and punctuation are those of his plates, which are irregular (he often left out question marks and full stops). The texts below come from two public-domain sources based on the plates: the transcription of copy Z of the *Songs* (printed and coloured by Blake, now in the Library of Congress) on Wikisource, and John Sampson’s “verbatim” edition of Blake’s poems (Oxford, 1905).

11.3.1 T1 · William Blake, “The Lamb” and “The Tyger”

Context. “The Lamb” belongs to *Songs of Innocence* (1789), “The Tyger” to *Songs of Experience* (1794). Blake did not print them on facing pages, but the last question of “The Tyger” points back to “The Lamb”, and readers have always read them as a pair (Figura 11.4). Read them aloud: both are songs.

Tabella 11.1 T1a — “The Lamb” (*Songs of Innocence*, 1789), complete. Text of copy Z (1826), as transcribed on Wikisource; no question marks on the plate.

Little Lamb who made thee	
Dost thou know who made thee	
Gave thee life & bid thee feed,	
By the stream & o’er the mead;	
Gave thee clothing of delight,	5
Softest clothing wooly bright;	
Gave thee such a tender voice,	
Making all the vales rejoice:	
Little Lamb who made thee	
Dost thou know who made thee	10
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee,	
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee:	
He is called by thy name	
For he calls himself a Lamb.	
He is meek & he is mild,	15
He became a little child:	
I a child & thou a lamb,	
We are called by his name.	
Little Lamb God bless thee	
Little Lamb God bless thee.	20

Tabella 11.2 T1b — "The Tyger" (*Songs of Experience*, 1794), complete. Text of J. Sampson (ed.), *The Poetical Works of William Blake* (1905), as transcribed on Wikisource.

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright	
In the forests of the night,	
What immortal hand or eye	
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?	
In what distant deeps or skies	5
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?	
On what wings dare he aspire?	
What the hand dare sieze the fire?	
And what shoulder, & what art,	
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?	10
And when thy heart began to beat,	
What dread hand? & what dread feet?	
What the hammer? what the chain?	
In what furnace was thy brain?	
What the anvil? what dread grasp	15
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?	
When the stars threw down their spears,	
And water'd heaven with their tears,	
Did he smile his work to see?	
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?	20
Tyger! Tyger! burning bright	
In the forests of the night,	
What immortal hand or eye,	
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?	

Glosses. *Dost thou*: do you · *bid thee feed*: told you to eat · *mead*: meadow · *wooly*: woolly (Blake's spelling) · *vales*: valleys · *meek*: gentle, humble · *Tyger*: tiger (Blake's spelling) · *frame*: make, shape · *symmetry*: harmony of proportions (to modern ears it does not rhyme with *eye*; for many

eighteenth-century readers it was close to a full rhyme) · *deeps*: depths of the sea · *aspire*: rise, fly up · *sieze*: seize, grab · *sinews*: muscles and tendons · *anvil*: the iron block on which a smith hammers metal · *clasp*: hold tightly.

	"The Lamb" *Songs of Innocence* (1789)	**"The Tyger"** *Songs of Experience* (1794)
SPEAKER	a child, speaking to a lamb	an unnamed voice, speaking to the tiger
QUESTIONS	"who made thee" — asked, then ANSWERED in stanza 2	over a dozen questions, NEVER answered
THE MAKER	gentle: "meek" and "mild", became "a little child" (Christ)	a smith at a forge: hand, hammer, chain, furnace, anvil
IMAGES	stream, mead, wool, a tender voice	fire, night, eyes, stars and spears
TONE	tender, trusting, calm	awe and fear: the sublime
FORM	2 stanzas of 10 lines; rhyming couplets (aa bb …)	6 quatrains; rhyming couplets (aabb); st. 6 repeats st. 1
METRE	short lines, 6–7 syllables, falling (trochaic) rhythm	7 syllables, trochaic; a few lines of 8 (iambic)
LINK	**the hinge: "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" ("The Tyger", l. 20)**	

Figura 11.4 A paired reading of "The Lamb" and "The Tyger". The rows compare speaker, questions, images, tone and form; the last line of the fifth stanza of "The Tyger" links the two poems. Syllable counts and rhymes are those of the two texts as printed in this section.

Analysis

Form. Both poems are written in **rhyming couplets**, and both use short, mostly seven-syllable lines in **trochaic metre** (Italian *metro trocaico*), a rhythm that starts on a stressed syllable and falls: TY-ger TY-ger BURN-ing BRIGHT. A few lines of "The Tyger" begin with an unstressed syllable and become iambic (could FRAME thy FEAR-ful SYM-me-TRY), so the hammer-like beat changes exactly where the poem speaks of making. "The Lamb" has two stanzas of ten lines that begin and end with a refrain; "The Tyger" has six quatrains, and the last repeats the first with one change: *Could* becomes *Dare*.

Language. "The Lamb" is built on repetition and on a question that receives an answer: the child asks who made the lamb, then explains it with a simple catechism — the maker "calls himself a Lamb" (Christ) and "became a little child", so child, lamb and maker share one name. "The Tyger" is built on more than a dozen questions that receive no answer. Its verbs belong to

a forge — *frame, twist, seize, clasp* — and its nouns to a blacksmith's workshop: hammer, chain, furnace, anvil, grasp. Many questions are incomplete ("What the hammer? what the chain?"), as if the speaker were too amazed to finish them.

Themes. The pair asks an old question in a new way: if a good God made the gentle lamb, who made the terrible tiger — the same God? The tiger is beautiful and frightening at once, the experience Burke called the **sublime** (chapter 10). Readers have seen in it the energy of creation, the violence of the world, the power of the artist and, in 1794, the French Revolution; Blake leaves the symbol open. The stanza about the stars, which "threw down their spears", recalls the rebel angels of *Paradise Lost* (chapter 3), and its central question — "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" — is the hinge between the two poems.

1. Who speaks in "The Lamb", and how do you know? How does the second stanza answer the first?
2. List the parts of the body named in "The Tyger". Whose body are they — the tiger's or the maker's?
3. Why do you think Blake changes *Could* to *Dare* in the last line?
4. Which poem feels more like a song, and which more like a spell? Read them aloud and explain.
5. "The Tyger" is a poem of questions. Is it a poem of doubt, of admiration or of fear?

11.3.2 T2 · William Blake, "London"

Context. From *Songs of Experience* (1794). The speaker walks through the streets of London at night (Figura 11.2 shows the city Blake knew). *Charter'd* means "granted by a charter": a charter was a legal document that gave rights or privileges — to a city, a company, a trade — and in the 1790s reformers argued that such "chartered rights" protected property, not people.

Tabella 11.3 T2 — "London" (*Songs of Experience*, 1794), complete. Text of J. Sampson (ed.), *The Poetical Works of William Blake* (1905), checked against the Wikisource transcription of the *Songs*.

I wander thro' each charter'd street,	
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,	
And mark in every face I meet	
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.	
In every cry of every Man,	5
In every Infant's cry of fear,	
In every voice, in every ban,	
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.	
How the Chimney-sweeper's cry	
Every black'ning Church appalls;	10
And the hapless Soldier's sigh	
Runs in blood down Palace walls.	
But most thro' midnight streets I hear	
How the youthful Harlot's curse	
Blasts the new born Infant's tear,	15
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.	

Glosses. *thro'*: through · *mark*: notice (verb); *marks*: signs, scars (noun) · *woe*: deep sorrow · *ban*: a curse, a legal prohibition, a public proclamation · *manacles*: chains for the wrists · *appalls*: horrifies; also, makes pale (a *pall* is the cloth over a coffin) · *hapless*: unlucky · *Harlot*: prostitute · *blasts*, *blights*: destroy, as frost and disease destroy plants · *hearse*: the carriage that carries a coffin.

Analysis

Form. Four quatrains rhyming *abab*, in iambic tetrameter (eight syllables) with some seven-syllable lines; the regular beat sounds like the walker's steps. The second stanza is one long sentence built on **anaphora** (Italian *anafora*), the repetition of the same words at the start of successive lines or phrases: "In every… In every… In every". The main verb arrives only at the end — "I hear" — so the reader, like the speaker, is surrounded by voices before understanding them.

Language. The poem moves in three steps: the speaker *sees* ("mark"), then *hears* (every cry), then hears things that turn into images — a cry that blackens a church, a sigh that "runs in blood" down palace walls. These are the boldest images in the *Songs*: sound becomes stain. Each victim is linked to an institution: the sweep to the Church, the soldier to the Palace, the young prostitute to Marriage. The last line ends with an oxymoron (English 3): a "Marriage hearse" joins the beginning of a family to a funeral.

Themes. "Mind-forg'd manacles" is the key phrase of the poem. The chains are made by minds — by laws, customs, fear and the habit of obedience — and they bind the people who suffer as well as the people who rule. Even the river is "charter'd", owned and controlled. In 1794, the year of the treason trials, a poem that set the Church and the Palace next to a sweep and a suffering soldier was a dangerous one; Blake never sold it in a normal edition.

1. Find the two meanings of "mark" in stanza 1. Why does Blake repeat the word?
2. Which three people appear in stanzas 3 and 4, and which institution is linked to each?
3. What do you think "mind-forg'd manacles" are? Give one example from the poem and one from today.
4. How does the poem move from seeing to hearing? Why might hearing be more disturbing?

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Writing a PEE paragraph on a symbol. Claim: *In "London", the soldier's sigh is a symbol of war that accuses the powerful.*

Point. In the third stanza Blake turns a soldier's sigh into blood on the walls of a palace. — **Evidence.** "And the hapless Soldier's sigh / Runs in blood down Palace walls." — **Explanation.** A sigh is a sound, but here it becomes a liquid that "runs", so the soldier's suffering leaves a visible stain. The stain is not on a battlefield but on the palace: Blake suggests that the people who live there are responsible for the war that kills the soldier. Written in 1794, a year after the war with France began, the image needs no name to be understood.

Note: one claim, one short quotation, and an explanation that comments on **words** (*sigh, runs, Palace*) and **context** (1794).

11.3.3 T3 · William Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper" (*Experience*)

Context. *Songs of Innocence* already contained a poem with this title. There a small sweep tells how he was sold by his father, and how his friend Tom Dacre dreamed of an angel who opened the sweeps' "coffins of black" and let them play in a green field; the boy wakes up happy and goes to work in the cold, and the poem ends with the moral "So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm." The child believes it; the reader cannot. In 1794 Blake wrote a second sweeper's song for *Experience*.

Tabella 11.4 T3 — "The Chimney Sweeper" (*Songs of Experience*, 1794), complete. Text of copy Z (1826), as transcribed on Wikisource.

A little black thing among the snow:	
Crying weep, weep, in notes of woe:	
Where are thy father & mother? say?	
They are both gone up to the church to pray.	
Because I was happy upon the heath,	5
And smil'd among the winters snow:	
They clothed me in the clothes of death,	
And taught me to sing the notes of woe	
And because I am happy & dance & sing,	
They think they have done me no injury:	10
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King	
Who make up a heaven of our misery.	

Glosses. *weep*: the sweep's cry, "(s)weep", and the verb "to cry" · *woe*: sorrow · *heath*: open, wild land · *winters*: winter's (Blake leaves out the apostrophe) · *clothes of death*: black clothes, like mourning; the soot-black of the trade · *injury*: harm, wrong · *make up*: build, invent; also "put together, compose".

Analysis

Form and voices. Three quatrains, the first rhyming *aabb*, the other two *abab*. Two voices speak: an adult who sees "a little black thing" (not even a child) and asks a question, and the child who answers for the rest of the poem. The plate gives no quotation marks, so the change of voice is left to the reader.

The child who knows. The *Innocence* sweeper accepts what adults tell him; this one understands. His parents have dressed him in "the clothes of death" and gone to church, and they think that because he can still dance and sing they have done him "no injury". The last two lines make the accusation political: God, "his Priest & King" build their heaven out of "our misery". The pun on *weep* sums up the poem: the cry that sells the child's work is also the sound of his grief.

1. Who asks the question in stanza 1? Who answers it?
2. Why does the adult call the child "a little black thing"?
3. Explain the irony of "They think they have done me no injury".

4. Compare the last line of each “Chimney Sweeper”. Which institution is criticised in the *Experience* poem?

11.4 Language: Questions and *-ever* Words

Blake’s songs are full of questions that are not really asking for information. This section looks at three B2 uses of questions — rhetorical, negative and emphatic — and at the *-ever* words (*whatever, however, whoever…*) that turn a question word into “no matter”. You already know how to form questions, subject and object questions, indirect questions and question tags (English 1–2): they are recalled here, not retaught.

11.4.1 Questions that do not ask

A **rhetorical question** (Italian *domanda retorica*) has the form of a question but is used to make a point, so the speaker expects no answer — or expects the listener to know the answer already. In “The Tyger”, “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” leaves the reader to answer; in a speech, “Who would choose to live in a slum?” means “Nobody would.” Rhetorical questions are useful in essays and speeches, but one or two are enough: a paragraph of questions sounds like a quiz.

A **negative question** (Italian *domanda negativa*) begins with a negative auxiliary: *Isn’t it…? Didn’t you…? Can’t we…?* It is used to show surprise, to ask for agreement, to criticise or to make a polite suggestion. In formal or literary English the full form puts *not* after the subject: *Is it not…? Did he not…?*

Tabella 11.5 Negative questions: uses

Use	Example	Meaning
surprise	*Haven’t you read “London”? It’s only sixteen lines!*	I thought you had.
expecting agreement	*Isn’t that exactly what Blake says in “Holy Thursday”?*	I think it is — do you agree?
criticism, annoyance	*Didn’t I tell you to bring the poem?*	I told you; why didn’t you?
suggestion, offer	*Why don’t we compare the two versions? Won’t you sit down?*	Let’s… / Please…
formal, literary	*Is it not strange that a church should bless such misery?*	= *Isn’t it strange…?*

Be careful with the **answer** to a negative question. In English, *yes* and *no* refer to the facts, not to the form of the question: “Didn’t you go to the exhibition?” — “**Yes**, I did” (I went) / “**No**, I didn’t” (I didn’t go). Add the short answer, and the meaning is always clear.

11.4.2 Emphatic questions: *ever*, *on earth*

To add surprise, disbelief or irritation to a *wh*-question, English adds *ever* or *on earth* after the question word: *Who ever told you that* Tyger *was a printer's mistake? What on earth are you doing? How ever did they climb those chimneys? Why on earth did nobody stop it?* In these questions *ever* is usually written as a separate word, although *whatever*, *whoever* and *however* are often written as one (*Whatever do you mean?*). *On earth* is neutral and common in speech; stronger expressions with swear words exist, but they are rude and do not belong in class or in writing.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Domande retoriche, negative ed enfatiche. La *domanda retorica* funziona come in italiano («Chi vorrebbe vivere così?» = nessuno). La *domanda negativa* si forma con l'ausiliare negativo in testa: *Isn't it...? Didn't you...?* (registro formale: *Is it not...?*). Esprime sorpresa, richiesta di conferma («non è vero che...?»), rimprovero o proposta (*Why don't we...?* = «perché non...?»). **Attenzione alla risposta:** in inglese *yes/no* descrivono il fatto. «Non sei andato alla mostra?» — «Sì, ci sono andato» = *Yes, I did*; «No, non ci sono andato» = *No, I didn't*. Mai ✗ *Yes, I didn't*. Per dare enfasi («ma chi te l'ha detto?», «che diavolo fai?») si aggiunge *ever* o *on earth* dopo la parola interrogativa: *Who ever told you that? What on earth are you doing?*

11.4.3 *-ever* words and *no matter*

Add *-ever* to a question word and you get a word that means "it does not matter which / who / how...". Figura 11.5 shows its three uses.

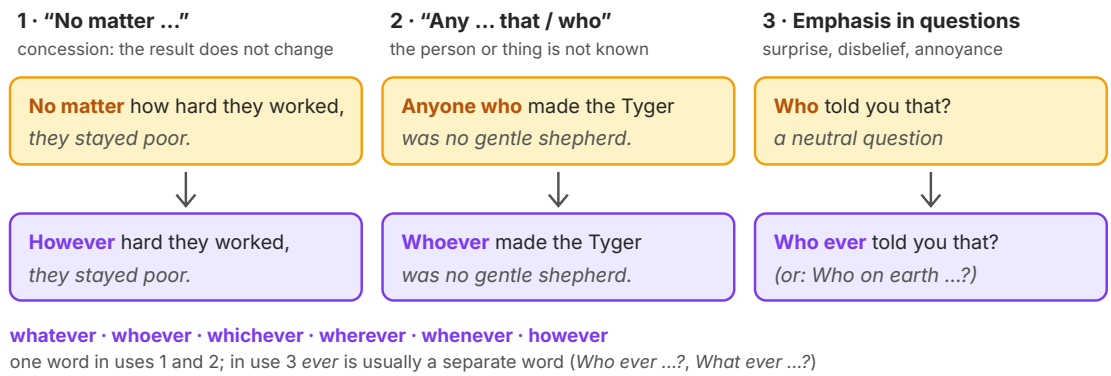


Figura 11.5 Three uses of *-ever* words. In use 1 the *-ever* clause means "no matter..."; in use 2 it is a noun clause ("anyone who..."), and cannot be replaced by *no matter*; in use 3 *ever* only adds emphasis to a question. Violet: the structure of this chapter; amber: the equivalent you already know.

Tabella 11.6 *-ever* words: form and use

Word	Meaning	Example
whatever	no matter what; anything that	*Whatever the critics said, Blake kept printing. Take whatever you need.*
whoever	no matter who; anyone who	*Whoever made the Tyger was not a gentle shepherd.*
whichever	no matter which (of a limited set)	*Whichever version you read, the sweeper ends in misery.*
wherever	no matter where; in any place	*Wherever he walked, he heard the same cries.*
whenever	no matter when; every time that	*Whenever a chimney needed sweeping, a child was sent up.*
however + adj./adv.	no matter how	*However hard they worked, the sweeps stayed poor.*
no matter + *what / who / how…*	= use 1 only	*No matter what the law said, masters still sent children up chimneys.*

Four points of grammar. (1) *However* meaning "no matter how" is followed by an adjective or adverb: *however small*, *however carefully*. Do not confuse it with the linker *however* (English 3), which means "but" and is followed by a comma. (2) In clauses with *-ever* and *no matter*, use a **present** tense for the future, as after *when* and *if*: *Whatever you decide tomorrow, I'll help* (✗ *whatever you will decide*). In formal English you may meet *may*: *however rich he may be*. (3) *Whoever* and *whatever* can be the subject or object of the main verb (use 2): *Whoever wrote this was angry*; *no matter who* cannot (✗ *No matter who wrote this was angry*). (4) After a negative noun phrase, *whatever* or *whatsoever* means "at all": *There is no evidence whatsoever that Blake sold the Songs to a publisher.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Le parole in *-ever*. Corrispondono a *qualunque cosa / chiunque / qualunque (dei due…) / dovunque / ogni volta che / per quanto*: *whatever you say* = «qualunque cosa tu dica»; *however hard* = «per quanto duramente». Nota tre differenze. (1) L'italiano usa il **congiuntivo** («chiunque sia», «per quanto lavorassero»); l'inglese usa l'**indicativo**, al presente anche per il futuro: *whoever it is*, *however hard they worked*. (2) *No matter* + *what/who/how* (= «non importa che cosa / chi / come») introduce solo una frase concessiva, mai il soggetto del verbo: si dice *Whoever said it was wrong*, non ✗ *No matter who said it was wrong*. (3) *However* + aggettivo = «per quanto»; *however* seguito da virgola = «tuttavia».

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *However he worked hard, he stayed poor.* → ✓ *However hard he worked, …* («per quanto lavorasse duramente»: l'aggettivo/avverbio segue subito *however*).

✗ *Whatever you will choose, I'll support you.* → ✓ *Whatever you choose, …* (presente per il futuro).

✗ *No matter he says, don't believe him.* → ✓ *No matter what he says, …* (serve la parola interrogativa).

✗ «Didn't you see it?» — «*Yes, I didn't.*» → ✓ *No, I didn't* (non l'ho visto) / *Yes, I did* (l'ho visto).

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Same meaning, three structures. Start: *It didn't matter how loudly the sweep cried; nobody listened.*

- *No matter*: **No matter how loudly the sweep cried**, nobody listened.
- *-ever*: **However loudly the sweep cried**, nobody listened. (adverb right after *however*)
- rhetorical question: *The sweep cried and cried — but* ***who ever listened to a sweep?*** (the expected answer is "nobody", so the question makes the same point with more feeling)

11.5 Skills: Conducting an Interview

11.5.1 Vocabulary: childhood, the city and poverty

Blake's songs and the history of the 1790s share a set of words about children, cities and the poor. Many of them are still used in news reports and in charity campaigns today.

Tabella 11.7 Childhood, the city and poverty

Word	Meaning	Example
innocence (n.)	lack of experience of evil; not being guilty	*The jury believed in his innocence.*
experience (n.)	knowledge of the world gained by living through things	*Experience had taught her not to trust the master.*
orphan (n.)	a child whose parents are dead	*The parish apprenticed orphans to sweeps.*
soot (n., uncount.)	black powder left by burning coal or wood	*He slept on the bags of soot.*
chimney / **flue** (n.)	the pipe that takes smoke up and out of a house	*The flues were too narrow for an adult.*
misery (n.)	great suffering, physical or mental	*They built their heaven on our misery.*
exploit (v.)	to use someone unfairly for your own profit	*Masters exploited children's small size.*
charity (n.)	help for the poor; an organisation that gives it	*The charity children sang in St Paul's.*
slum (n.)	a poor, overcrowded and dirty area of a city	*Thousands lived in the slums of St Giles.*
destitute (adj.)	without money, food or a home	*The war left many families destitute.*
neglect (v./n.)	to fail to take care of; lack of care	*The Act was a story of neglect.*

Word formation: small words — diminutive suffixes

Italian makes small things with *-ino, -etto, -ello* almost at will: *agnellino, casetta, libretto*. English has a few **diminutive** suffixes (Italian *suffissi diminutivi*), but they are not productive — you cannot add them to any noun. **-ling**: *duckling* (a young duck), *gosling*, *seedling*, *sapling* (a young tree); sometimes it sounds negative: *weakling*, *underling*. **-let**: *piglet*, *booklet*, *leaflet*, *droplet*, *streamlet*. **-ette** (from French; English 2, Unit 8): *kitchenette*, *statuette*, *cigarette*. **-ie / -y**: informal and affectionate, often in Scotland (chapter 10): *lassie*, *laddie*, *doggie*, *granny*. Some old diminutives have lost the idea of "small": a *cigarette* is not a small cigar for most speakers. For most nouns, English simply uses an adjective: *casetta = a little house* (✗ *a houselet*), *gattino = a kitten* or *a little cat*, *agnellino = a little lamb* — exactly Blake's "Little Lamb".

11.5.2 Listening: Making a Plate

Before you listen. Have you ever made a print — with a potato, a rubber stamp, a lino block? What does "printing in relief" mean? **Listen (books closed)** while three classmates read the script: Giulia, from Turin, interviews a printmaker in a Bristol studio by video call for the Link Reading Club blog; Sam is in the studio with the camera. Then answer: which steps of Figura 11.3 does Ruth describe?

Tabella 11.8 Listening script — Making a Plate

Giulia	Hi Ruth, can you hear me? Great. So, this is for the Link Reading Club blog — we're reading Blake's *Songs* in Turin and in Bristol. Thank you for having us. First of all, could you tell us how you started printing?
Ruth	Of course. I trained as a painter, actually, but I always loved books, and about twenty years ago I took an evening class in etching. I never went back to painting.
Giulia	And what exactly is relief etching? How is it different from ordinary etching?
Ruth	In ordinary etching the lines are bitten into the metal, and the ink sits down in the lines. In relief etching it's the opposite. You paint your design on the copper with something the acid can't eat — a kind of varnish. Then the plate goes into the bath, the acid eats the bare copper, and your design is left standing up. You ink the top, like a stamp.
Giulia	So what you're saying is that the parts that print are the parts you protect?
Ruth	Exactly. Whatever you paint stays; whatever you leave bare disappears.
Giulia	And did Blake use the same acid as you?
Ruth	Probably not. He most likely used diluted nitric acid, which gives off nasty fumes. Most studios today use ferric chloride — it still eats copper, and you still need gloves and goggles, but it doesn't fill the room with gas.
Giulia	Could you say a bit more about the writing? Didn't Blake have to write everything backwards?
Ruth	He did, because the print is a mirror image of the plate. Some people think he wrote straight onto the copper in reverse; others think he found a way to transfer it. Sam tried this morning.
Sam	I wrote "Tyger" backwards. It took me four attempts, and the *g* still looks like a *9*.
Giulia	That's interesting. And after printing — how did the colour get there?
Ruth	By hand. Blake and his wife Catherine coloured the pages with watercolour, one by one, so every copy is different. That's what amazes me: however many times he printed a plate, he never made the same book twice.
Giulia	One last question. What would you say to students who want to try?
Ruth	Get your hands dirty! Start small, wear gloves, and be patient with the mirror writing.
Giulia	Thank you so much, Ruth. Is there anything you'd like to add?
Ruth	Just that Blake was a craftsman first. Read the poems, but look at the plates too.

After listening. (1) Find two open questions, one follow-up question and one sentence in which Giulia reformulates Ruth's answer. (2) Find a negative question and two *-ever* words. (3) Why do modern studios prefer ferric chloride? (4) Why is no copy of a Blake book identical to another?

11.5.3 Speaking: conducting an interview

A good interviewer prepares, listens and follows the answers. Use mostly **open questions**, which begin with *what, how, why* or *could you tell me…* and cannot be answered with yes or no; keep closed questions for checking facts. The best questions are often **follow-up questions**: questions built on what the speaker has just said (*You said you never went back to painting — why not?*). Reformulating an answer in your own words shows that you have understood and gives the speaker a chance to correct you.

Tabella 11.9 Useful language — conducting an interview

Stage	Expressions
Opening	*Thank you for agreeing to talk to us. Could we start with…? First of all, could you tell us…?*
Open questions	*What made you…? How did you…? Why do you think…? What was it like to…?*
Following up	*Could you say a bit more about…? You mentioned… — what did you mean? What happened next?*
Reformulating, checking	*So what you're saying is… If I've understood correctly… Do you mean that…?*
Moving on	*That's really interesting. Let's move on to… I'd like to ask you about…*
Closing	*One last question… Is there anything you'd like to add? Thank you so much for your time.*

1. **Task 1 (pairs, 6–8 minutes).** Student A is a journalist; student B is William Blake in 1795, in his Lambeth workshop. A prepares six open questions (his method, his wife's work, the *Songs*, the war, his visions) and asks at least two follow-up questions; B answers in character, using facts from this chapter. Swap roles with Blake in 1827, at the end of his life.
2. **Task 2 (groups, real interview).** Interview an adult in your school or family about their childhood work or chores, or about a craft they practise. Prepare, record notes, reformulate at least twice, and write a 120-word summary for a class blog.

11.5.4 Writing: a source-based essay

A **source-based essay** (Italian *saggio su fonti*) answers a question by using a set of given documents — texts, data, images — as evidence. It is a common B2 and exam task, and the basis of the Italian *testo argomentativo* with documents. The rules: use **all** the sources, quote or summarise them accurately, say which source each idea comes from (*Source A shows…*, *according to Source B…*), connect them to each other, and reach your own conclusion. The question: *"Child labour: has anything changed since Blake's time?"*

Tabella 11.10 Sources for the model essay

Source	Content
A (text summary)	In 1775 the London surgeon Percivall Pott described a cancer common among chimney sweeps and linked it to soot. In 1788 Parliament ruled that no boy should be apprenticed to a sweep before the age of eight, but the law was hardly enforced; climbing boys were used until an Act of 1875 made the licensing of sweeps compulsory.
B (data summary)	The International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF estimated that at the beginning of 2020 about 160 million children aged 5–17 worldwide were in child labour, 79 million of them in hazardous work. About 70% of child labour was in agriculture (ILO and UNICEF, *Child Labour: Global estimates 2020*, 2021).
C (literary text)	"How the Chimney-sweeper's cry / Every black'ning Church appalls" — William Blake, "London" (1794), ll. 9–10.

Tabella 11.11 Model text — a source-based essay (248 words, title excluded)

Child labour: has anything changed since Blake's time?
When Blake wrote "London" in 1794, the cry of a chimney sweep was one of the most familiar sounds of the city. More than two centuries later, it is worth asking whether the world has really silenced it.
In some ways, much has changed. Source A shows that the dangers of the trade were known early: in 1775 Pott linked the sweeps' cancer to soot, and in 1788 Parliament set a minimum age of eight. Today, child labour is forbidden by international law, and no reader of Blake would find a climbing boy in a British street.
However, the sources also suggest that the problem has moved rather than disappeared. Source A admits that the 1788 law was hardly enforced, and that climbing boys were used for almost another century. Similarly, Source B estimates that about 160 million children were still working in 2020, half of them in hazardous jobs, most of them in fields rather than chimneys. Whatever the law says, poverty still sends children to work.
Finally, Source C reminds us who is responsible. Blake's sweep does not just suffer: his cry "appalls" the "black'ning Church", as if the institutions that should protect him were stained by his misery. The same question can be asked today about the companies and consumers who profit from cheap goods.
In conclusion, laws and science have changed since 1794, but the sources show that rules without enforcement achieve little. Isn't that exactly what Blake's poem has been saying all along?

Structure. Introduction with the question and a hook from Source C · paragraph 2: what has changed (Source A) · paragraph 3: what has not (Sources A and B, linked with *However* and *Similarly*) · paragraph 4: responsibility (Source C, a short quotation analysed) · conclusion that answers the question, ending with a rhetorical question. Notice that the numbers of Source B are reported, not changed, and that "half" is an honest rounding of 79 out of 160.

Checklist. ✓ every source used and named · ✓ quotations short and exact, in inverted commas · ✓ data reported accurately, with the date · ✓ sources connected to each other, not listed · ✓ your own answer to the question · ✓ formal register, no contractions except in a final rhetorical question · ✓ 220–260 words.

Task. Write a source-based essay (220–260 words) on the question *"Should poetry be political?"*, using three sources: Source A — the last two lines of T3; Source B — this summary: *in May 1794 Habeas Corpus was suspended and leaders of reform societies were tried for treason; Blake never published "London" in a normal printed edition*; Source C — the opening of Berchet's sentence on the "poesia de' vivi" (Connections). For a research version, check the latest ILO estimates of child labour on the ILO website, and note the date and the title of the report you use.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Comparing paired texts. When two texts answer each other — "The Lamb" and "The Tyger", the two "Chimney Sweeper" songs — do not analyse them one after the other. Draw a two-column grid with four rows: **image** (the main pictures), **sound** (rhythm, rhymes, repetitions), **speaker** (who speaks, to whom, what he knows) and **tone** (the feeling). Fill both columns before you write, then build each paragraph on one row, comparing (*while…, whereas…, in contrast…*). Figura 11.4 is such a grid. Transfer it: Italian literature has a whole genre of paired voices, the medieval *contrasto* — a dialogue in which two speakers oppose each other, as in Cielo d'Alcamo's "Rosa fresca aulentissima" — and the same grid works for two Latin poems on one subject, or for a poem and its translation.

11.6 Connections: Romantic Debates and Blake's Dante

11.6.1 "Poesia de' vivi": the Romantic debate in Italy

Romanticism reached Italy as an argument. In January 1816 the Milan journal *Biblioteca italiana* published an article by the French-Swiss writer Madame de Staël, "Sulla maniera e la utilità delle traduzioni", which advised Italian writers to translate modern English and German poets instead of repeating classical mythology. Classicists answered angrily; the young writers of Milan answered with manifestos. The best known is Giovanni Berchet's *Lettera semiseria di Grisostomo al suo figliuolo* (1816), which presents his translations of two German ballads by Bürger and defends a poetry for the whole people, about the things that move them now. Berchet sums up the difference between the two schools in one famous sentence:

Tabella 11.12 Giovanni Berchet, *Lettera semiseria di Grisostomo al suo figliuolo* (1816); text of G. Berchet, *Scritti critici e letterari* (Bari, Laterza, 1912), as transcribed on Wikisource.

Però io stimo di poter nominare con tutta ragione «poesia de' morti» la prima, e «poesia de' vivi» la seconda.
("However, I think I can call the first [classical poetry], with every reason, 'poetry of the dead', and the second [Romantic poetry] 'poetry of the living'." — translation by the editors)

Blake would have agreed with the idea, if not with the tone. Like Berchet, he rejected the imitation of Greek and Roman models — in the preface to *Milton* he attacked the "Stolen and Perver-

ted Writings of Homer & Ovid" — and like him he chose forms that ordinary people knew: hymns, songs, ballads. But the differences are as instructive as the similarities. The Italian debate was public: it took place in journals such as *Il Conciliatore* (1818–19), it was linked to the hope of an independent Italy, and it ended when the Austrian censors closed the journal. Blake's revolution in poetry was private: printed in a few dozen copies in a Lambeth workshop, it was almost unknown until decades after his death.

11.6.2 Blake reads Dante

In the last three years of his life, commissioned by his young friend the painter John Linnell, Blake made more than a hundred watercolour designs for Dante's *Divine Comedy*; he reportedly learned enough Italian to read the poem in the original. Death came in 1827, before he could finish them; only a few were engraved. One of the most famous shows Paolo and Francesca (*Inferno* V) swept away in a whirlwind of lovers, while Dante faints on the ground. Francesca's words explain why love would not let her go: "Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona" (*Inferno* V.103: "Love, which forgives no one who is loved from loving in return"). Blake admired Dante as a visionary poet, but notes written on some designs show that he disagreed with Dante's idea of eternal punishment — another of his "contraries".

COLLEGAMENTI

Chemistry: how acid makes a relief. Copper is a fairly unreactive metal: dilute hydrochloric or sulphuric acid hardly attack it, but nitric acid — the *aqua fortis* of old etchers — oxidises it, forming soluble copper(II) nitrate and nitrogen oxides: $3\ Cu + 8\ HNO_3 \rightarrow 3\ Cu(NO_3)_2 + 2\ NO + 4\ H_2O$ (the colourless NO then reacts with air to give brown, toxic NO_2). Where the plate is covered by an acid-resisting varnish, the acid cannot reach the metal, so the protected areas stay at their original height while the rest is eaten away. Blake most likely used nitric acid, but his exact recipe is not documented and has been reconstructed by experiment. Modern studios usually etch copper with a solution of iron(III) chloride, which oxidises copper without releasing nitrogen oxides: $2\ FeCl_3 + Cu \rightarrow 2\ FeCl_2 + CuCl_2$.

COLLEGAMENTI

Medicine: the first occupational cancer. In his *Chirurgical Observations* (1775), the London surgeon Percivall Pott described the "chimney-sweepers' cancer", a cancer of the scrotum that appeared in young men who had climbed chimneys as boys, and blamed the soot that stayed in their skin. It is usually considered the first time a cancer was linked to a person's work — the start of the study of **occupational diseases** (Italian *malattie professionali*) and of environmental causes of cancer. Pott also described the sweeps' childhood: "they are thrust up narrow, and sometimes hot chimnies, where they are bruised, burned, and almost suffocated" (spelling of the 1775 edition). In the 1930s chemists in London identified in coal tar the substance responsible for this kind of cancer, benzo[a]pyrene, which is also present in soot and in tobacco smoke.

APPROFONDIMENTO

Blake after Blake. When Blake died, few people outside a small circle of young artists remembered him. His reputation was made by a biography, Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake, "Pictor Ignotus"* ("the unknown painter", 1863), completed after Gilchrist's death by his wife Anne and the poet-painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his brother William Michael. The Victorians then printed the *Songs* in ordinary type — often "correcting" Blake's spelling, so that the *Tyger* became a *Tiger*. In 1916 Hubert Parry set the lyric from *Milton* to music as the hymn "Jerusalem", now one of the best-known songs in Britain. Today scholars study Blake's books as wholes, text and image together, and the online Blake Archive shows different copies side by side, so that a student can see how differently each copy was coloured.

1. **History.** Compare the treason trials of 1794 with the trials of Italian patriots after 1820–21 (Silvio Pellico, *Le mie prigioni*, 1832): how did governments react to the fear of revolution?
2. **Art.** Find out the difference between engraving, etching and woodcut, and look for an example of each in an Italian museum's online collection.
3. **Science.** Why is soot dangerous? Research what "carcinogen" means and find two other occupational diseases of the Industrial Revolution.

SINTESI

- In the 1790s Britain was at war with revolutionary France (from 1 February 1793, until 1815 with a short peace in 1802–03); reform societies such as the London Corresponding Society (1792) were watched and prosecuted.
- In May 1794 the government suspended **Habeas Corpus**; reform leaders tried for treason in 1794 were acquitted; in 1795 the "Two Acts" limited political speech and meetings.
- London (about a million people in 1801) mixed wealth and misery; **climbing boys** swept chimneys; the 1788 Act (minimum age eight) was hardly enforced until an Act of 1875.
- **Romanticism** (c. 1780s–1830s) valued imagination, feeling, nature, the individual, the child and the past, against neoclassical reason and decorum; the label and the "two generations" are later conveniences.
- William Blake (1757–1827), engraver, painter and poet, was almost unknown in his lifetime; his wife Catherine worked with him.
- **Illuminated printing**: text and images etched together on copper by **relief etching**, printed and coloured by hand, so every copy differs.
- *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794) show "the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul" in paired poems.
- Blake's songs are dramatic **lyrics**; their images (lamb, tiger, chimney, chains) work as open **symbols**, not as allegory.
- "The Lamb" asks and answers; "The Tyger" asks question after question and answers none; "London" uses anaphora and synaesthetic images to accuse Church, Palace and Marriage; the *Experience* sweeper understands what the *Innocence* sweeper accepts.
- Language: rhetorical, negative and emphatic questions (*Didn't you…? Who ever…? What on earth…?*); *-ever* words and *no matter* + present tense; diminutives *-ling, -let, -ette, -ie*.
- Skills: conducting an interview with open and follow-up questions; writing a source-based essay that names and connects its sources.
- Connections: Berchet's "poesia de' vivi" (1816) and the Italian Romantic debate; Blake's Dante watercolours (1824–27); the chemistry of etching; Pott and the first occupational cancer (1775).

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● When did France declare war on Britain?
   - **A.** 14 July 1789
   - **B.** 1 February 1793
   - **C.** May 1794
   - **D.** 18 June 1815

2. ● What did the suspension of Habeas Corpus in 1794 allow the government to do?
   - **A.** close all newspapers
   - **B.** raise taxes without Parliament
   - **C.** keep suspects in prison without trial
   - **D.** forbid the reform societies to collect money

3. ● What was Blake's "illuminated printing"?
   - **A.** printing poems in gold letters for rich patrons
   - **B.** a method of printing with candles behind the paper
   - **C.** engraving pictures to be inserted between printed pages
   - **D.** etching text and pictures on the same plate, then colouring each copy by hand

4. ● The full title of the 1794 book continues "Shewing the Two…"
   - **A.** Contrary States of the Human Soul
   - **B.** Ages of the Human Life
   - **C.** Kingdoms of Heaven and Hell
   - **D.** Voices of the Poor of London

5. ● True or false? Correct the false statements. a The Chimney Sweepers Act of 1788 set a minimum age of eight for apprentices. b Blake was a famous poet in his lifetime. c Catherine Blake helped her husband print and colour his books. d *Songs of Innocence* was published by the bookseller Joseph Johnson. e The English Romantic poets called themselves "Romantics". f Blake was tried for sedition in 1804 and acquitted.

6. ● Match each work with its date. Works: *Poetical Sketches* · *Songs of Innocence* · *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* · *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* · *Milton* · the Dante watercolours. Dates: 1783 · 1789 · c. 1790 · 1794 · c. 1804–10 · 1824–27.

7. ●● Explain in 50–70 words three differences between neoclassicism and Romanticism. Give one example of a writer for each.

8. ●● Explain in 50–70 words what a symbol is and how it differs from an allegory, using one of Blake's images as an example.

Text Analysis

9. ● In “The Lamb”, who answers the questions of the first stanza?

   A. the lamb itself

   B. the speaker, a child

   C. God, speaking from heaven

   D. nobody: they remain open

10. ● T1, “The Tyger”. Find: a four tools or places of a blacksmith; b two verbs that describe the maker’s daring; c the only word that changes between stanza 1 and stanza 6. Then explain the effect of the change (30–40 words).

11. ●● T1. Mark the stresses in CAPITALS in “Tyger! Tyger! burning bright” and in “Could frame thy fearful symmetry?”. How many syllables does each line have, and which metre does each use?

12. ●● T2, “London”. Find: a an example of anaphora; b the two meanings of “mark” in stanza 1; c the image in which a sound becomes a stain; d the oxymoron in the last line.

13. ●● T2. Paraphrase stanza 3 in modern, simple English (25–35 words).

14. ●●● Compare the two “Chimney Sweeper” poems (80–100 words): who speaks, what the child understands, and what the last line says about religion.

15. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (80–100 words) on this claim: “In ‘London’, the chains that bind people are made by minds, not by metal.”

Language

16. ● ___ hard the sweeps worked, they never earned enough to leave the trade.

   A. Whatever

   B. No matter

   C. Whenever

   D. However

17. ● “Didn’t you go to the exhibition?” “___ — I went on Saturday and loved it.”

   A. Yes, I didn’t

   B. No, I did

   C. Yes, I did

   D. No, I didn’t

18. ● ___ wrote this anonymous pamphlet knew the reform societies very well.

   A. Whoever

   B. No matter who

   C. Who ever

   D. Whichever

19. ● Rewrite with *no matter*. a However late it is, call me. b Whatever happens, keep writing. c Wherever you go in London, you see poverty. d Whoever rings, don't open the door. e Whichever poem you choose, read it aloud twice. f Whenever she visits, she brings a book.

20. ●● Rewrite with an *-ever* word. a It doesn't matter what you decide; I'll support you. b Anyone who finds the lost plate will get a reward. c It doesn't matter how carefully you write; mirror writing is hard. d Every time the bell rang, the children ran out. e You can sit in any place you like. f It doesn't matter which version you read; the ending is sad.

21. ●● Make negative questions for these situations. a You are surprised that your friend hasn't heard of Blake. b You want your teacher to agree that the two poems are linked. c You are annoyed: your brother promised to buy bread and forgot. d You suggest to friends that you all go to the museum together. e In a formal speech, you want the audience to agree that the law was unjust (use the full form *…not…*).

22. ●● Complete with *ever*, *on earth*, an *-ever* word or *whatsoever*. a What ___ is that noise? b ___ you do, don't touch the acid with bare hands. c Who ___ told you that Blake was rich? d There is no evidence ___ that Blake sold the *Songs* to a bookseller. e You can borrow ___ of the two books you prefer. f How ___ did a child climb such a narrow flue?

23. ●● Find and correct the mistake in each sentence (✗). a ✗ However he tried hard, the plate failed. b ✗ Whatever you will decide, tell me tomorrow. c ✗ No matter who wrote the letter was angry. d ✗ "Haven't you finished?" "Yes, I haven't." e ✗ No matter she says, I won't change my mind. f ✗ No matter how he is rich, he is never satisfied.

24. ●●● Translate into English. a Per quanto tu possa essere stanco, finisci il saggio stasera. b Chiunque abbia scritto questa poesia conosceva bene Londra. c Ma chi te l'ha detto? Non hai letto il capitolo?

Vocabulary

25. ● Complete with words from the vocabulary table (one word per gap, in the correct form). a After the fire the family was completely ___: no house, no money, no food. b The boy's parents were dead, so the parish treated him as an ___. c Wash your hands: they're black with ___. d Many families lived in the ___ of St Giles, ten people in one room. e The master ___ the children, paying them nothing. f The poem shows the ___ of children who work in the cold.

26. ●● Diminutives. a Form the diminutive: duck, pig, book, kitchen, seed, statue. b Which of these words have lost the idea of "small"? *cigarette, booklet, toilet, piglet*. c Translate without inventing a diminutive: *una casetta, un libretto di istruzioni, un gattino, delle goccioline d'acqua*.

27. ●● Word families. Complete the table: *exploit* (v.) → ___ (n., the act) · *misery* (n.) → ___ (adj.) · *innocence* (n.) → ___ (adj.) · *experience* (n.) → ___ (adj., having experience) · *neglect* (v.) → ___ (adj., -ed) · *poverty* (n.) → ___ (adj.).

Writing and Speaking

28. ●●● Writing. Write the source-based essay set in the Skills section (“Should poetry be political?”, 220–260 words), using and naming all three sources.

29. ●● Speaking. In pairs, prepare and conduct a 5-minute interview with a classmate playing Catherine Blake in 1828, a year after William’s death. Use at least four open questions, two follow-up questions and one reformulation.

Towards B2

30. ●● Open cloze. Write ONE word in each gap. Blake was born in 1757 in London, (1) ___ he spent almost all his life. He never went to an ordinary school, but at fourteen he was apprenticed (2) ___ an engraver. He married Catherine Boucher, (3) ___ could not write when they met. (4) ___ hard he worked, he earned little, and his books sold very (5) ___ copies. He died poor in 1827, and for decades almost nobody read him. Only (6) ___ Gilchrist’s biography appeared in 1863 (7) ___ readers begin to discover him. Today, (8) ___ you go in Britain, someone can quote “The Tyger”.

31. ●● Word formation. Use the word in brackets to form a word that fits the gap. a The ___ of children was common in eighteenth-century London. (EXPLOIT) b Blake’s method gave him complete ___ from publishers. (DEPEND) c The sweeps lived in terrible ___. (POOR) d Pott’s ___ linked soot to cancer. (OBSERVE) e The Act was hardly ___. (FORCE) f Blake’s poems are short but ___ powerful. (EXTRAORDINARY) g Few readers in his lifetime ___ how original he was. (REAL) h Romantic poets valued ___ above rules. (IMAGINE)

32. ●●● Key-word transformation. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word in capitals. Use 2–5 words, including the word given. a It doesn’t matter what the critics say; I love Blake. (WHATEVER) ___, I love Blake. b I’m surprised you didn’t read the poem. (HAVEN’T) Why ___ the poem? c Anyone who made the tiger was not gentle. (WHOEVER) ___ the tiger was not gentle. d Although the plates were small, they took days to colour. (HOWEVER) ___ were, they took days to colour. e It didn’t matter where he walked; he heard cries. (MATTER) ___ he walked, he heard cries. f Who told you that, I wonder? I can’t believe it! (EARTH) Who ___ that?

33. ●● Multiple matching. Match each statement (1–6) with the text it describes (A “The Lamb”, B “The Tyger”, C “London”, D “The Chimney Sweeper”, *Experience*). Texts can be used more than once. 1 The speaker answers his own questions. 2 Two different voices speak, without quotation marks. 3 The first and the last stanza are almost identical. 4 The speaker walks through the city at night. 5 Parents go to church while their child works. 6 The poem never answers its main question.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. D: the introduction to the Romantic period and the selection from Blake's *Songs*.
- [WU] D. Wu (ed.), *Romanticism: An Anthology*: the Blake section, with the *Songs* in Blake's own spelling.
- [BUT] M. Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*: the chapters on the 1790s and on Blake.
- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the chapter on the Romantic age.
- [POR] R. Porter, *Enlightenment*: the chapters on radicalism and on the city.
- [MOR] K. O. Morgan (ed.), *The Oxford History of Britain*: the chapter on the age of revolution (the 1790s, the war with France).
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries "Romantic period", "lyric" and "symbol".
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on negative questions, *whoever, whatever* etc., and *no matter*.

Glossario del capitolo

Anaphora
anafora — the repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of successive lines, clauses or sentences.

Climbing boy
piccolo spazzacamino — a child apprenticed to a master sweep and sent up inside chimneys to clean them.

Diminutive
diminutivo — a word or suffix that expresses smallness or affection (*-ling, -let, -ette, -ie*).

Follow-up question
domanda di approfondimento — a question built on the answer the speaker has just given.

Habeas Corpus
habeas corpus — the legal right of a prisoner to be brought before a judge, so that nobody is held without trial; suspended in Britain in 1794.

Illuminated printing
stampa miniata — Blake's name for his method of etching text and pictures together on copper, printing them and colouring each copy by hand.

Intaglio
incisione calcografica — a printing method in which the lines are cut or etched into the plate and hold the ink below its surface.

Lyric
lirica — a short poem in which a single voice expresses thoughts and feelings; originally a poem to be sung.

Negative question
domanda negativa — a question that begins with a negative auxiliary (*Isn't…? Didn't…?*), used for surprise, agreement, criticism or suggestions.

Occupational disease
malattia professionale — an illness caused by the conditions of a person's work.

Open question
domanda aperta — a question that cannot be answered with yes or no (*what, how, why…*).

Relief etching
acquaforte a rilievo — etching in which acid eats away the unprotected metal so that the design stands up and is inked on its surface.

Rhetorical question
domanda retorica — a question asked to make a point, not to get an answer.

Romanticism
Romanticismo — the European movement (c. 1780s–1830s) that valued imagination, feeling, nature, the individual, childhood and the past.

Sedition
sedizione — speech or writing intended to encourage rebellion against the state.

Source-based essay
saggio su fonti — an essay that answers a question using a set of given documents as evidence, naming each source.

Symbol
simbolo — a concrete image that suggests larger meanings without a fixed, one-to-one correspondence.

Trochaic metre
metro trocaico — a rhythm based on feet of a stressed and an unstressed syllable (TY-ger), which "falls".

Soluzioni

1. B (Louis XVI was executed in January 1793; war followed on 1 February).

2. C (Habeas Corpus guarantees that a prisoner is brought before a judge; its suspension allowed detention without trial).

3. D.

4. A (*Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul*).

5. a True. b False: he was known mostly as an engraver, to a small circle; his fame came after 1863. c True. d False: Blake printed and sold it himself, by illuminated printing. e False: the label was given later by critics and historians. f True (Chichester, January 1804).

6. *Poetical Sketches* – 1783 · *Songs of Innocence* – 1789 · *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* – c. 1790 · *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* – 1794 · *Milton* – c. 1804–10 · the Dante watercolours – 1824–27.

7. *Traccia:* neoclassicism imitates classical models and follows rules and decorum, Romanticism values originality and imagination; neoclassicism prefers reason and general human nature, Romanticism feeling and individual experience; neoclassicism prefers the town and polished forms (heroic couplet), Romanticism nature and simple song forms or blank verse. Examples: Pope or Johnson (neoclassical); Blake or Wordsworth (Romantic).

8. *Traccia:* a symbol is a concrete image that suggests larger meanings without a fixed key; in an allegory each element stands for one precise idea. Blake's tiger suggests energy, terror, the power of creation and perhaps revolution, and readers do not agree on one meaning — so it is a symbol, not an allegory.

9. B.

10. a hammer, chain, furnace, anvil (also "grasp", "twist the sinews"). b *aspire*, *seize* (also *dare*). c *Could* → *Dare*. *Traccia:* the question is no longer whether anyone was able to make the tiger, but who was bold enough to do it; the maker's daring, and perhaps the danger of creation, become the point.

11. TY-ger TY-ger BURN-ing BRIGHT: 7 syllables, trochaic (four stresses, the last foot incomplete). could FRAME thy FEAR-ful SYM-me-TRY: 8 syllables, iambic tetrameter. (In speech the last syllable of *symmetry* is weak; the metre gives it a light stress, which is why it can rhyme with *eye*.)

12. a "In every cry of every Man, / In every Infant's cry of fear, / In every voice, in every ban" (also "every… every" in stanza 1). b *mark* = notice (verb, l. 3); *marks* = signs, scars (noun, l. 4). c "the hapless Soldier's sigh / Runs in blood down Palace walls" (also the cry that "appalls" the "black'ning Church"). d "Marriage hearse".

13. Model: The cry of the child who sweeps chimneys horrifies every church, which is black with soot, and the sigh of the unlucky soldier seems to run like blood down the walls of the palace.

14. *Traccia:* in *Innocence* one child speaks; he accepts his work and the moral of the angel's dream, "if all do their duty, they need not fear harm", which the reader sees as false comfort. In *Experience* an adult asks a question and the child answers; he understands that his parents and the Church exploit him. The *Innocence* poem ends with an obedient religious moral; the *Experience* poem ends by accusing God, "his Priest & King" of building a heaven on "our misery".

15. *Model:* Blake suggests that oppression lives first in people's minds. In stanza 2 he lists "every cry", "every voice" and "every ban" before revealing what he hears in them: "The mind-forg'd manacles I hear." The verb "forg'd" belongs to the smith's workshop, but here minds, not hammers, make the chains: laws, customs and fear bind both rulers and

ruled. The anaphora of "every" shows that nobody escapes, and the sound of chains in every voice makes the oppression audible.

16. D (*However* + adverb; *No matter* would need *how*).

17. C (yes/no describe the fact: he went).

18. A (a free relative, subject of "knew"; *No matter who* cannot be a subject).

19. a No matter how late it is, call me. b No matter what happens, keep writing. c No matter where you go in London, you see poverty. d No matter who rings, don't open the door. e No matter which poem you choose, read it aloud twice. f No matter when she visits, she brings a book.

20. a Whatever you decide, I'll support you. b Whoever finds the lost plate will get a reward. c However carefully you write, mirror writing is hard. d Whenever the bell rang, the children ran out. e You can sit wherever you like. f Whichever version you read, the ending is sad.

21. Model answers: a Haven't you heard of Blake? b Aren't the two poems linked? / Isn't it clear that the two poems are linked? c Didn't you promise to buy bread? d Why don't we all go to the museum together? e Was that law not unjust? / Is it not clear that the law was unjust?

22. a on earth (or *ever*: *What ever is that noise?*). b Whatever. c ever (or *on earth*). d whatsoever (or *whatever*). e whichever. f ever (or *on earth*).

23. a However hard he tried, the plate failed. b Whatever you decide, tell me tomorrow. c Whoever wrote the letter was angry. d "Haven't you finished?" "No, I haven't." (or "Yes, I have.") e No matter what she says, I won't change my mind. f No matter how rich he is, he is never satisfied (the adjective comes straight after *how*).

24. a However tired you are (or may be), finish the essay tonight (also *No matter how tired you are*). b Whoever wrote this poem knew London well. c Who ever (or Who on earth, or Whoever) told you that? Haven't you read the chapter?

25. a destitute. b orphan. c soot. d slums. e exploited. f misery (also accepted: neglect).

26. a duckling, piglet, booklet, kitchenette, seedling, statuette. b *cigarette* and *toilet* (from French *toilette*, originally a small cloth) no longer suggest "small"; *booklet* and *piglet* still do. c a little house (or a small house); an instruction booklet (here *-let* exists); a kitten (or a little cat); water droplets (or tiny drops of water).

27. exploitation · miserable · innocent · experienced · neglected · poor.

28. *Traccia:* introduction stating the question and a position; one paragraph using Source A (the *Experience* sweeper accuses God, Priest and King); one using Source B (the risk of writing politically in 1794, Blake's private publication); one using Source C (Berchet: poetry of the living speaks about the present); links between sources (*similarly, however, whereas*); a conclusion that answers the question. Criteria: all sources used and named, accurate short quotations, own argument, formal register, 220–260 words.

29. *Model questions:* "Mrs Blake, thank you for talking to us. Could you tell us how you met William?" — "What was your work in the workshop?" — follow-up: "You said you coloured the pages — how did you choose the colours?" — reformulation: "So what you're saying is that no two copies were the same?" — "How did William react when nobody bought his books?" — "Is there anything you'd like people to remember about him?" Answers in character should use facts from the chapter (marriage 1782, learning to read and write, printing and colouring, poverty, his death in 1827).

30. (1) where (2) to (3) who (4) However (5) few (6) when / after (7) did (8) wherever. (6) *when* + (7) *did*: "Only when … appeared did readers begin…" is inversion after *only when* (chapter 3).

31. a exploitation b independence c poverty d observation(s) e enforced f extraordinarily g realised (or realized) h imagination.

32. a Whatever the critics say (or Whatever critics say). b haven't you read. c Whoever made. d Howe-

ver small the plates. e No matter where. f on earth told you.

33. 1 A · 2 D · 3 B · 4 C · 5 D · 6 B.