

Yeats' "The Second Coming"

1. Define the following terms before you read the poem:
 - A. gyre
 - B. anarchy
 - C. conviction
 - D. revelation
 - E. pitiless
 - F. indignant
 - G. falcon and falconer
 - H. the Second Coming
 - I. vexed
 - J. rough
 - K. slouches
 - L. the Sphinx

2. The phrase *Spiritus Mundi* means *spirit of the world* and suggests a divine intervention being revealed to the speaker through his memory of human history.

3. Now read the poem.
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4. What is the relationship between a falconer and falcon, and why does Yeats use this analogy?
5. Reread the last four lines of the poem. What is the Biblical reference, and why does the poet use it?
6. Go back through the poem. Make a list of all positive and negative words.
7. What do you believe is the poet's vision of the future?
8. Why does Yeats use the word "loosed" (lines 4 and 5)? [Relate to *Hamlet*.]
9. What "centre" (British spelling) does he refer to, and why can't it hold?
10. Why is the tide "blood-dimmed" (l. 5)?
11. What "ceremony of innocence" is "drowned," and why (l. 6)?
12. Why does Yeats break the poem into two stanzas?
13. Why does he include two different references to birds in "falcon" and "desert birds"?
14. Why is it significant that a "rough beast" (the Sphinx?) is going to Bethlehem to be born, and why is it "slouching" toward it?
15. Now think about the novel. List 10 things which have "fallen apart" (or are falling apart) in the novel. Arrange/organize/categorize them (topics/subtopics).
16. Why does Achebe choose the phrase "things fall apart" (l. 3) as his title?
17. How is the poem's ending ironic? Why does the poem end on an ironic note?