

The Character of a Happy Life
(Henry Wotton)

How happy is he born and taught
That serveth not another's will;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill!

Whose passions not his masters are;
Whose soul is still prepared for death,
Untied unto the world by care
Of public fame or private breath;

Who envies none that chance doth raise,
Nor vice; who never understood
How deepest wounds are given by praise;
Nor rules of state, but rules of good;

Who hath his life from rumours freed;
Whose conscience is his strong retreat;
Whose state can neither flatterers feed,
Nor ruin make oppressors great;

Who God doth late and early pray
More of His grace than gifts to lend;
And entertains the harmless day
With a religious book or friend;

This man is free from servile bands
Of hope to rise or fear to fall:
Lord of himself, though not of lands,
And having nothing, yet hath all.

Words**Meanings**

armour	steel plates shaped to cover the body
envy	wishing for what others have
humour	having or showing a sense of amusement
conscience	one's inner sense of right and wrong
flatterer	one who praises someone in order to gain something
oppressor	cruel person
servile	slave like

Theme of the poem

A happy man is honest , moderate and modest . He has faith in God and is content with his place in life , not chasing after glory or material possessions. He is , in the end , richer in what really matters .

EXERCISES

1. Answer the following questions.

- i. What is the main idea of the poem?
- ii. Underline the nouns in the poem.
- iii. Make a list of the rhyming words in the poem.

Example: taught, thought

Add two more rhyming words in each line.

- i. born, _____, _____.
- ii. soul, _____, _____.
- iii. vice, _____, _____.

2. Paraphrase the second stanza in the poem.
3. Explain the last stanza.