

RAINER MARIA RILKE

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (1875–1926)

LANGUAGE: GERMAN

DIE SONETTE AN ORPHEUS: 21

Frühling ist wiedergekommen. Die Erde
ist wie ein Kind, das Gedichte weiß;
viele, o viele... Für die Beschwerde
langen Lernens bekommt sie den Preis.

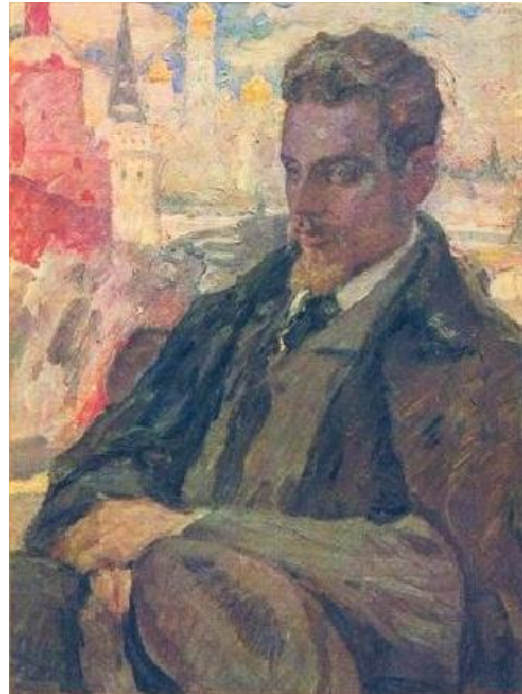
Streng war ihr Lehrer. Wir mochten das Weiße
an dem Barte des alten Manns.
Nun, wie das Grüne, das Blaue heiße,
dürfen wir fragen: sie kanns, sie kanns!

Erde, die frei hat, du glückliche, spiele
nun mit den Kindern. Wir wollen dich fangen,
fröhliche Erde. Dem Frohsten gelingt's.

O, was der Lehrer sie lehrte, das Viele,
und was gedruckt steht in Wurzeln und langen
schwierigen Stämmen: sie singts, sie singts!

Pronunciation Guide:

ß sounds like *ss*
w sounds like *v*
v sounds like *f*



Rainer Maria Rilke is credited with revolutionizing German poetry. He was born in Prague, which was at that time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. When he was old enough, he left his childhood home and traveled to many places, including Munich, Paris, and a castle in Italy, where he began writing poetry and completed his only novel. After that initial burst of creativity, he suffered a lack of inspiration and stopped writing. World War I unexpectedly broke out while the poet was visiting Munich, and he found himself unable to return home to Paris. After the war, during which he served briefly in the Austro-Hungarian army, he moved to Switzerland. There, following nearly a decade of silence, he felt inspired to write again. It took him only three weeks to compose the fifty-five sonnets that make up *Die Sonette an Orpheus*.

TRANSLATOR'S GLOSSARY		
WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
alten (adj.)	having lived for a long time	old, ancient, aged, elderly
an (prep.)	indicates location within or upon something else	in, to, among, upon
Barte (n.)	a growth of hair on the chin	beard, whiskers, stubble
bekommt (v.)	from the verb <i>bekommen</i> —to be given something	gets, obtains, receives, wins, earns, is given
Beschwerde (n.)	situation requiring a great effort	difficulty, grievance, trouble, hardship, struggle
Blaue (n.)	the color of the sky or sea	blue
das (pron.)	indicates a person or thing previously mentioned	that, those, who
dem (art.) den (art.) der (art.)	denoting one or more people or things already mentioned or assumed to be common knowledge	the
des (prep. + art.)	indicating an association between two entities	of the
dich (pron.)	used to refer to the person that the speaker is addressing	you, yourself, thee, thyself
die (art.)	indicates a person or thing previously mentioned	the, which, who, that
du (pron.)	used to refer to the person that the speaker is addressing	you, thou
dürfen (v.)	given permission to do something	may, are allowed, are permitted
ein (art.)	one singular	one, a, an
Erde (n.)	the planet on which we live; the substance of the land	earth, world, ground, soil
fangen (v.)	to capture; to touch someone being chased in the game of tag	to catch, to tag, to trap, to capture
fragen (v.)	to say something in order to obtain an answer or information; to request someone to do or give something	to ask, to query, to request, to inquire

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
frei (adv.)	without limitations or restriction	freely, without restraint, at will, boundlessly
fröhliche (adj.)	feeling or showing pleasure or contentment	happy, joyous, festive, jaunty, lighthearted, gleeful, jovial, carefree
Frohsten (n.)	the person or people who show the most pleasure or contentment	happiest, liveliest, merriest, most cheerful, most joyous
Frühling (n.)	the season after winter and before summer when many plants grow	spring, springtime
für (prep.)	due to	for, due to, because of
Gedichte (n.)	pieces of writing written in verse	poems, odes, poetry, lyrics
gedruckt (adj.)	marked, carved, or indented on the surface	printed, pressed, recorded, imprinted, engraved, etched
gelingts (v.)	from the verb <i>gelingen</i> —to have success	succeed, will succeed, Godspeed
glückliche (adj.)	favored by or involving luck or fortune	fortunate, lucky, successful, favorable, charmed, blessed
Grüne (n.)	the color of most trees and grass	green, verdure
hat (v.)	from the verb <i>haben</i> —to have or contain	has, possesses, owns, contains
heiße (adj.)	very hot or bright	hot, burning, heated, fiery, flaming, scorching, searing
ihr (adj.)	belonging to or associated with a female person previously mentioned	her
in (prep.)	indicates location or position within something	in, within, inside
ist (v.)	from the verb <i>sein</i> —to be	is, has
kanns (v.)	from the verb <i>können</i> —to be capable to or know how to do something	can, is able, knows
Kind (n.)	a young human being	child, kid, infant, youngster
Kindern (n.)	young human beings	children, kids, youngsters
langen (adj.)	lasting or taking a great amount of time	long, prolonged, lengthy, extensive, long-lasting

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
Lehrer (n.)	a person who teaches	teacher, instructor, tutor, schoolmaster, educator
lehrte (v.)	from the verb <i>lehren</i> —to teach	taught, instructed
Lernens (n.)	the devotion of time and attention to acquiring knowledge	studies, learning, education, schooling, scholarship
Manns (n.)	adult human males	men, gentlemen, folks
mit (prep.)	accompanied by a person or thing	with, alongside, together with
mochten (v.)	from the verb <i>mögen</i> —to like	liked, enjoyed, fancied
nun (adv.)	in that case	now, well, then
o (exclamation)	an exclamation expressing a strong emotion	oh, alas, no
Orpheus (n.)	a musician and poet from ancient Greek mythology who was able to charm all living things with his music	Orpheus
Preis (n.)	a thing given as a reward in recognition of an outstanding achievement	prize, award, reward, honor, trophy
schwierigen (adj.)	requiring a lot of effort or skill to accomplish or withstand	difficult, trying, severe, tough, demanding, burdensome, strenuous
sie (pron.)	used to refer to a female	she; her
singts (v.)	from the verb <i>singen</i> —to make musical sounds with the voice	sings, croons, trills, chants
Sonette (n.)	a poem of fourteen lines (two quatrains and two tercets) using any of a number of formal rhyme schemes	sonnet
spiele (v.)	command form of the verb <i>spielen</i> —to play	go play, play tag, go chase
Stämmen (n.)	the main body or stalk of a plant	stems, trunks, stalks, shoots
steht (v.)	from the verb <i>stehen</i> —to be, appear, or stand upright	is, stands
streng (adj.)	demanding that rules are obeyed	strict, stern, severe, harsh, rigid, austere
und (conj.)	in addition to	and

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
viele (adv.)	a large number of	many, a lot, tons, countless, hordes
Viele (n.)	a large number of something	many, plenitude, great number, large amount
war (v.)	from the verb <i>sein</i> —to be	was
was (pron.)	referring to any thing or amount	what, whatever, that which
weiß (v.)	from the verb <i>wissen</i> —to know or be familiar with	learns, knows, knows of, remembers, is familiar with
Weiße (n.)	white color or pigment; the opposite of black	whiteness, white
wie (prep.)	having the same characteristics or qualities as	like, similar to, as
wir (pron.)	used by a speaker to refer to him or herself and one or more other people	we
wiedergekommen (v.)	back again after a period of absence	come back, returned, here again, reappeared
wollen (v.)	to have a desire to possess or do something	want, desire, long
Wurzeln (n.)	the part of a plant that attaches it to the ground or to a support	roots

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

PHRASE BY PHRASE

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REFLECTING AND FINDING MEANING

Group Member Names:

Date: _____

Pick a scribe for the group, and work together to answer the questions.

What are the best parts of this translation, and why do you think they are good?

What elements of the original poem did you lose in the translation? What did you manage to keep?

Did you achieve something new with your translation, and if so, does it make sense in the poem or not?
