



Collegedunia NCERT Solutions

A Thing of Beauty NCERT Solution: line-grounded explanations for John Keats's opening to *Endymion*, Book I, from *Flamingo* (2026-27)

Chapter 9: Flamingo Poetry: A Thing of Beauty

About this Chapter

A Thing of Beauty is the opening passage of John Keats's long poem *Endymion* (1818), Book I, anthologised in *Flamingo*. The extract argues that beautiful things give us lasting joy, lift the weight of suffering, and bind us to the earth despite the gloom of everyday life. These solutions ground every answer in specific lines of the poem: the famous opening couplet, the catalogue of natural beauty, the role of the "mighty dead", and the closing image of "an endless fountain of immortal drink".

Topics covered: Beauty as a lasting joy • Suffering and the human condition • Nature as solace • The role of art and legend • Iambic pentameter and the heroic couplet

Poet and source.

John Keats (1795–1821), England; opening of *Endymion*, Book I.

Form.

Heroic couplets in iambic pentameter; rhymed AA BB CC.

Central thesis.

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever", beauty keeps growing in loveliness and never dies.

Also see for this chapter: [Revision Notes](#)

Think it out

Q9.1 List the things of beauty mentioned in the poem.

SOLUTION

Keats opens the passage with the famous line, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," and then offers a deliberately mixed catalogue of beautiful things drawn from nature, daily

life, and human story. Reading the poem from line 5 onwards, the list builds in this order:

Key lines

“The sun, the moon, / Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon / For simple sheep; and such are daffodils / With the green world they live in; and clear rills . . . / Are mighty dead.”

- **The sun and the moon.** The two great natural lights are the first items on the list. They renew themselves every day and every month, so they fit Keats’s argument that beauty is a joy that returns.
- **Old and young trees that give shade.** The trees offer “a shady boon” to the “simple sheep”, so beauty here is also useful, not merely decorative.
- **Daffodils with the green world they live in.** Daffodils are paired with their surroundings; Keats is careful to praise the whole landscape, not the single flower in isolation.
- **Clear rills (small streams) and the cool shelter their flowing water makes.** The streams “make for themselves a cooling covert” against “the hot season”.
- **The mid-forest brake rich with musk-rose blooms.** The wild rose bushes in the heart of the forest carry the season’s fresh scent.
- **The grandeur of the dooms / We have imagined for the mighty dead.** Beauty is not only natural; it includes the noble stories and tomb-inscriptions we build around great figures of the past.
- **All lovely tales we have heard or read.** The closing item in the catalogue is the body of literature itself, legend, myth, story.

How to read the catalogue

Notice that Keats mixes everyday natural things (sun, moon, sheep, streams) with grand human things (the dead, lovely tales) on a single list. Beauty is therefore not a luxury, it is woven into every level of life.

Final Answer: The poem names the sun, the moon, old and young trees that shade sheep, daffodils with their green world, clear streams with their cool shelters, musk-rose blooms in the mid-forest brake, the grandeur we imagine for the “mighty dead”, and all lovely tales we have heard or read.

EXPERT’S SOLUTION : Dr Ananya Iyer, PhD English Literature, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Strategic angle. For the boards, an examiner is looking for *both* the natural and the human-cultural items on Keats’s list; many students forget the second half. Read the catalogue as two movements: lines 5 to 9 are natural, lines 10 to 13 are cultural, and the

whole list is held together by the opening claim that “a thing of beauty is a joy for ever”.

- Lines 5 to 6 open with the celestial pair: “the sun, the moon”. These are universal, available to every reader, and cyclical, so they instantly demonstrate the “for ever” of line 1.
- Lines 6 to 7 move down to terrestrial life: “Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon / For simple sheep”. Keats includes both ancient and recent trees to suggest that beauty is not the property of one age.
- Line 7 names “daffodils / With the green world they live in”, deliberately attaching the flower to its setting. The background is part of the beauty.
- Lines 8 to 9 add the “clear rills” that make “a cooling covert” against the hot weather, and the “mid-forest brake” “rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms”. Both items are sensory: cool to touch and rich to smell.
- Lines 10 to 12 turn from nature to culture: “the grandeur of the dooms / We have imagined for the mighty dead” refers to the imagined glory we attach to legendary heroes; “all lovely tales that we have heard or read” generalises this to all literature.
- Line 13 binds the catalogue back to the thesis with “an endless fountain of immortal drink”. The list is the proof that the fountain keeps pouring.

Why this matters. For Keats, beauty is plural. He stacks items from two different orders (natural and cultural) inside a single sentence to show that no single domain has a monopoly on it. A short answer that lists only flowers and sheep misses half the poem.

Final Answer: Items of beauty in the poem: sun, moon, old and young shade-giving trees, daffodils with their green setting, clear streams with cool coverts, musk-rose blooms in the mid-forest brake, the grandeur imagined for the “mighty dead”, and all lovely tales of literature.

Q 9.2 List the things that cause suffering and pain.

SOLUTION

After his catalogue of beautiful things, Keats turns to the dark side of human life in lines 2 to 5 and explains exactly what beauty must work against. The list is short but heavy, and every item is a named human experience, not an abstraction.

Key lines

“Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth / Of noble natures, of the gloomy days, / Of all the unhealthy and o’er-darkened ways / Made for our searching. . .”

- **Despondence.** Loss of hope or low spirits. This is the inward suffering of an

individual mind.

- **The inhuman dearth of noble natures.** The shortage of good, generous, noble people around us. Keats calls this shortage “inhuman”, meaning unworthy of human beings.
- **Gloomy days.** Spells of dullness, sadness, or grey weather, both literal and metaphorical, that weigh on the spirit.
- **Unhealthy and o’er-darkened ways made for our searching.** The wrong, unwholesome paths we sometimes choose as we go through life looking for meaning. Keats’s word “searching” admits that the suffering is partly the cost of seeking.

♥ Why This Matters

Notice that Keats does not blame fate or god; the four items name states of *mind* and habits of *behaviour*. This makes the remedy he proposes (a thing of beauty) directly available to the reader: it counteracts the same inner conditions that produced the pain.

Final Answer: Keats lists four causes of suffering: despondence, the inhuman dearth of noble natures, gloomy days, and all the unhealthy and over-darkened ways we make for ourselves while searching for meaning.

EXPERT’S SOLUTION : Mr Arjun Mehra, MA English, Delhi University

Alternative reading. The four items can be grouped into *two pairs*, and reading them this way gives you a much sharper answer.

- The first pair is internal: “despondence” and “the inhuman dearth / Of noble natures”. One is a private mood; the other is a social shortage. Together they show that suffering has both a personal and a communal source.
- The second pair is environmental: “the gloomy days” and “the unhealthy and o’er-darkened ways”. One names the atmosphere around us; the other names the moral paths we take through it. Together they show that suffering also comes from the world we walk through and the routes we choose in it.
- The structure is therefore deliberate: two inner causes and two outer causes, four in total. A beautiful thing acts as a counterweight to all four.
- Keats’s diction is also worth marking: “inhuman”, “gloomy”, “unhealthy”, “o’er-darkened”. All four adjectives are negations of warmth and light. The thesis line, “A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,” answers each of them with positive language: “joy”, “for ever”, “loveliness”.

Why this matters. A board answer that names the four items in two pairs (inner versus

outer) lands the marks for both content and structure. It also matches the way Keats actually built the sentence: a balanced inventory of darkness that the rest of the poem sets out to relieve.

Final Answer: Despondence (inner mood), inhuman dearth of noble natures (social shortage), gloomy days (atmosphere), and unhealthy o'er-darkened ways we make for our searching (chosen moral paths). Two inner causes and two outer causes, four in total.

✗ Common Mistake

A common slip is to write “life is sad” or “human suffering is listed” without naming the four items. Keats is specific; the answer must be specific too. Quote at least two of the four phrases from the poem.

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Q 9.3 What does the line, ‘Therefore are we wreathing a flowery band to bind us to the earth’ suggest to you?

SOLUTION

The line comes immediately after Keats has listed the kinds of suffering that crowd our days. He says that beauty “moves away the pall / From our dark spirits” and then concludes: “Therefore are we wreathing a flowery band / To bind us to the earth”. The line is the poem’s most compact image of how beauty saves us.

Key lines

“... some shape of beauty moves away the pall / From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon ... / Therefore are we wreathing a flowery band / To bind us to the earth...”

- **The “flowery band” is made of beautiful things.** Each beautiful thing that Keats has listed (sun, moon, trees, daffodils, streams, musk-roses, lovely tales) is one flower in the wreath.
- **The band binds us to the earth.** Without it, despair might cut our attachment to the world. The wreath is what keeps us tied to life despite the suffering of the previous lines.
- **The verb is “wreathing”, not “finding”.** We are *actively making* the band day by day. We notice and gather beautiful things; the wreath is a human activity, not a gift dropped from the sky.

- **The word “therefore” connects cause and effect.** Because life carries despondence, gloomy days and dark ways, *therefore* we collect beauty. Beauty is presented as a response to suffering, not as a luxury alongside it.
- **The image is gentle, not heroic.** A wreath of flowers is light, beautiful, and human-scaled. Keats does not say we “fight” or “escape” the gloom; we tie a flower-chain to keep ourselves connected to the earth.

How to read the metaphor

“Bind us to the earth” is a positive binding. Elsewhere in poetry “bind” often means restraint; here it means *anchor*, in the sense in which a kite is anchored by its string. Without the wreath, the spirit might drift away from life altogether.

Final Answer: The line suggests that every beautiful thing we notice becomes one flower in an imagined wreath. Together, these flowers form a band that ties our spirits to the earth and keeps us connected to life despite suffering. The act is human and ongoing: we keep weaving the band, day after day.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION : Dr Meera Krishnan, PhD Romantic Poetry, University of Hyderabad

Strategic angle. Keats is a Romantic poet and this line is a Romantic-thesis line. The Romantics believed that natural beauty has moral and psychological power. To read the metaphor well, separate its three working parts.

- **“Wreathing”** is a participle of ongoing action. The wreath is never finished; we keep adding flowers as we go. This matches Keats’s opening claim that beauty “will never / Pass into nothingness”, the supply never runs out.
- **“Flowery band”** is a metaphor for the cumulative memory of beautiful things. The flowers are not literal; they stand for moments of beauty noted and stored: a sunrise seen, a daffodil noticed, a story remembered.
- **“Bind us to the earth”** is the function of the band. The earth here means our daily life with its routines and griefs. The band keeps us attached to that life rather than drifting into despair or numbness.
- **The whole image therefore reverses gravity.** Suffering pulls the spirit down; the wreath pulls it back to the earth as a positive force. The two pulls balance each other inside the same sentence.
- **For a class 12 reader, the practical lesson is simple.** Keats is saying that paying attention to beautiful things is not idle. It is one of the things that actually keeps a person alive and connected.

Why this matters. The image is small and tender, but it carries the whole poem’s argument: beauty is a thread, not a fortress. A board answer that brings out the active

verb (“wreathing”), the metaphor (the wreath as memory of beauty), and the function (binding us to the earth) earns the full marks for this question.

Final Answer: The line suggests that human beings actively weave a wreath of beautiful experiences (sun, moon, trees, tales) that keeps the spirit anchored to the world. Beauty is not decoration; it is the flower-chain that holds us to the earth in the face of despondence and gloomy days.

Q 9.4 What makes human beings love life in spite of troubles and sufferings?

SOLUTION

Keats answers this question in the second half of the poem. He acknowledges the suffering in lines 2 to 5 (“despondence . . . gloomy days . . . o’er-darkened ways”) and then immediately offers the antidote in lines 5 onwards: a beautiful thing lifts the gloom and keeps us in love with life.

Key lines

“. . . Yes, in spite of all, / Some shape of beauty moves away the pall / From our dark spirits.”

- **Beauty moves away the “pall” from our dark spirits.** A pall is a cloth spread over a coffin; the word suggests the heaviness of grief and the silence of death. Some shape of beauty (and Keats stresses “some”, meaning any beautiful thing at all) lifts this cloth.
- **The list of natural beauty keeps us company.** The sun and moon return every day and every month; trees give shade to sheep; daffodils bloom in their green world; cool streams form shelters against hot summers; musk-roses scent the mid-forest. These are all freely available sources of joy.
- **The grandeur of the mighty dead and the lovely tales give us cultural anchors.** The legends, myths and stories we inherit reassure us that humans have lived and felt beauty before, and that we are not alone in the experience.
- **Beauty is a “joy for ever” that grows.** Keats opens with the famous line and adds, “Its loveliness increases; it will never / Pass into nothingness.” The joy from a beautiful thing does not fade with time; it keeps deepening when we remember it.
- **The closing image of “an endless fountain of immortal drink”.** Beauty is finally compared to a fountain that never runs dry. The water of joy is always available, and that constant supply is what keeps us in love with life.

Exam Tip

A strong answer for this question lists *both* the sources of beauty and the *effect* on the human spirit. Begin with the “pall” image, walk through two or three concrete items from Keats’s catalogue, and close with the fountain metaphor. Cite at least two phrases from the poem.

Final Answer: Despite troubles, human beings love life because beautiful things lift the heaviness of grief. Nature (sun, moon, trees, daffodils, streams, musk-roses) and culture (the grandeur of the “mighty dead” and “all lovely tales we have heard or read”) together form a wreath that ties us to the earth and pours an endless fountain of immortal drink for the spirit.

EXPERT’S SOLUTION : Mr Karan Sethi, MA English Literature, University of Calcutta

Strategic angle. Read the question as the poem’s own central argument expressed as a query. Keats’s whole purpose in the extract is to answer exactly this: why, given so much suffering, do we keep choosing life?

- **Beauty as a counterweight, not an escape.** Keats does not deny suffering; he names it sharply (“despondence”, “gloomy days”, “inhuman dearth”). The remedy is offered in the same sentence as the pain, balanced against it.
- **Beauty is universal and free.** Keats’s catalogue is deliberately ordinary: sun, moon, trees, sheep, daffodils. He is not pointing to rare or expensive beauty; he is pointing to what is already there for everyone. Hence suffering can be balanced by attention rather than by possession.
- **Beauty grows in memory.** “Its loveliness increases” is a key claim. A beautiful sunrise remembered years later still gives joy; the joy compounds. Suffering often fades with time and beauty keeps deepening, so the long-term balance tilts in favour of life.
- **Beauty links us to other humans.** “All lovely tales we have heard or read” brings in literature and shared legend. We love life partly because others have loved it before us and left those tales behind for us to inherit.
- **The fountain image seals the answer.** Beauty is an “endless fountain of immortal drink, / Pouring unto us from the heaven’s brink”. The supply is constant and free, so the love of life is renewable.

Why this matters. Keats’s reply matters because it locates the will to live in a daily, available, low-cost source: noticing beauty. He does not ask the reader to be heroic or to have answered the deepest questions of life; he asks only that the reader keep an eye open for sun, moon, trees and lovely tales.

Final Answer: Human beings love life in spite of suffering because beauty lifts the heaviness of grief. Natural beauty (sun, moon, trees, flowers, streams) and cultural beauty (legends, tales) act as a constant fountain of joy whose loveliness deepens with time. This balance, suffering on one side and renewable beauty on the other, is why life remains worth choosing.

Q 9.5 Why is 'grandeur' associated with the 'mighty dead'?

SOLUTION

The phrase appears in lines 10 to 11: "the grandeur of the dooms / We have imagined for the mighty dead." Keats is here adding a cultural item to his catalogue of beauty: not only natural things, but also the noble stories we tell about great figures of the past.

Key lines

"... And such too is the grandeur of the dooms / We have imagined for the mighty dead; / All lovely tales that we have heard or read."

- **"Mighty dead" refers to great heroes, warriors, kings and figures of legend.** Keats has classical and Indian-English readings of mythology in mind, where great figures continue to influence the imagination long after they die.
- **"Dooms" here means destinies, fates, or final ends.** The word is older and grander than "deaths"; it carries the weight of a complete life and an appointed purpose.
- **"Grandeur" is the noble, awe-inspiring quality of these stories.** It comes partly from the deeds of the figures themselves and partly from the imagination of later readers who keep retelling those deeds.
- **The key phrase is "we have imagined".** The grandeur is not in the dead body or the tomb; it is in the *imagined dooms* that later generations attach to the mighty dead. The community of readers and storytellers gives the dead figures their grandeur.
- **This is why grandeur fits Keats's argument.** The mighty dead inspire us today through the noble stories that survive them. Those stories are another flower in the wreath that binds us to the earth.

Why This Matters

Notice how Keats moves smoothly from physical nature (sheep, trees, streams) to cultural memory (tombs, tales, the mighty dead). Both kinds of beauty function the same way in the poem: they comfort us in life. Cultural memory is just as much a part of the "flowery band" as the actual flowers.

Final Answer: Grandeur is associated with the “mighty dead” because they are the great heroes of legend whose stories continue to inspire the living. The grandeur lies not in the dead themselves but in the noble fates (“dooms”) the human imagination has assigned to them through tales. These tales become a source of beauty that lifts the spirit, just like the sun, moon and musk-roses.

EXPERT’S SOLUTION : *Dr Sneha Bose, PhD English Literature, Jadavpur University*

Alternative reading. A useful way to read this question is through Keats’s interest in classical antiquity. He read translations of Homer, knew the Greek myths well, and admired the great heroes of Indian and European epic. “Mighty dead” is therefore very specific.

- **The poet places the dead inside a cultural memory, not a tomb.** The phrase “we have imagined for them” relocates their grandeur from the physical grave to the human mind. This is a Romantic move: the imagination is the seat of value.
- **Grandeur belongs to the dooms (destinies), not to the deaths.** The dignity is in the whole shape of a great life: its trials, its choices, its end. A mighty figure whose life was small would not be “mighty dead”. Keats’s sense of “mighty” is moral and narrative, not military.
- **Tales preserve the grandeur across generations.** “All lovely tales we have heard or read” carries the grandeur forward. Each retelling adds a new flower to the wreath. The grandeur is communal and renewable.
- **The mighty dead, finally, balance the despondence of line 2.** The opening of the poem names personal despondence; the mid-passage names the inhuman dearth of noble natures. The mighty dead are a remedy for both: their stories restore the supply of noble natures inside our imagination, even when current life is short of them.

Why this matters. This is one of the most easily missed items in the poem because students often skim through “mighty dead” as background detail. In fact, it is Keats’s bridge from natural beauty to human culture, and it carries half the argument of the extract.

Final Answer: “Grandeur” is linked to the “mighty dead” because the noble destinies we imagine for great figures of the past lift our present spirit. The grandeur lives in our cultural memory and our tales, which renew themselves with each retelling, and so the “mighty dead” join the sun, the moon, and the musk-rose blooms as sources of lasting beauty.

Q 9.6 Do we experience things of beauty only for short moments or do they make a

lasting impression on us?

SOLUTION

Keats's opening couplet is the direct answer to this question: "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever; / Its loveliness increases; it will never / Pass into nothingness". The poem takes the position that beautiful experiences leave a lasting, in fact a deepening, impression.

Key lines

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever: / Its loveliness increases; it will never / Pass into nothingness; but still will keep / A bower quiet for us, and a sleep / Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing."

- **Beauty is "a joy for ever"**. Keats does not say "a joy in the moment". The pleasure of a beautiful thing lasts well past the moment of seeing it.
- **Its loveliness "increases"**. This is the most striking claim in the poem. Beauty does not fade in memory; it grows. A sunrise remembered ten years later can feel more luminous than the original moment, because the mind has added to it.
- **It "will never pass into nothingness"**. Keats is explicit: the beautiful thing has a permanent place inside us. Even the physical object (a flower, a tree) may go, but the joy it gave does not.
- **It keeps for us "a bower quiet" and "a sleep full of sweet dreams"**. The image of a quiet bower (a leafy shelter) describes the lasting effect of remembered beauty: it forms a peaceful inner refuge that the mind can retreat to.
- **The closing image of the "endless fountain" confirms permanence**. The fountain is "immortal"; the drink pours "unto us from the heaven's brink". Beauty therefore is not a one-time gift; it is a continuous supply.

Why memory matters

The poem is partly about how memory works. The original sight of a daffodil lasts minutes; the joy of having seen it can return for years afterwards. Keats argues this second, remembered joy is just as real as the first.

Final Answer: Beautiful things make a lasting impression that grows deeper with time. Keats opens the poem with "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever" and adds that "its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness". The poem closes with an "endless fountain of immortal drink", confirming that the joy of beauty is continuous and unending.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION : Mr Rohan Acharya, MA English, University of Calcutta

Strategic angle. Three lines of Keats's poem make this answer water-tight. Quote one phrase from each.

- **Line 1: "A joy for ever"**. The word "for ever" already settles the question. Beauty is not a flash; it is a continuing pleasure.
- **Lines 2 to 3: "Its loveliness increases"**. Loveliness is not preserved at the level of the original moment; it grows. This is unusual: most pleasures fade with repetition. Keats argues beauty is different.
- **Lines 4 to 5: "... a bower quiet for us, and a sleep / Full of sweet dreams"**. The lasting impression is practical and embodied. Remembered beauty becomes calm sleep, easy breathing, sweet dreams. The body itself registers the long aftereffect.
- **Line 13 (last line of the extract): "an endless fountain of immortal drink"**. Keats closes with an image of unlimited supply. The water of beauty keeps pouring; we keep drinking. The pleasure is permanent.
- **Put together, the four citations form a complete argument.** Beauty is for ever, beauty grows, beauty lodges in the body as calm sleep, and beauty pours endlessly. A short-moment reading of beauty is rejected by the poem at every level.

Why this matters. For Keats and the Romantic tradition more broadly, the lasting impression of beauty is precisely what redeems human life from sorrow. A short-lived view of beauty would not be enough to balance "despondence ... inhuman dearth ... gloomy days". The whole argument of the poem rests on the lasting power of remembered beauty.

Final Answer: Things of beauty leave a lasting impression that deepens with time. Keats writes that "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever", that "its loveliness increases", and that it gives "a bower quiet ... and a sleep full of sweet dreams". The closing image of an "endless fountain of immortal drink" completes the argument: beauty is a continuous, lifelong source of joy.

Q 9.7 What image does the poet use to describe the beautiful bounty of the earth?

SOLUTION

The image is found in the last lines of the extract: "an endless fountain of immortal drink, / Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink". Keats compares the earth's beauty to a fountain that never runs dry and whose water is the gift of heaven itself.

🔑 Key lines

“... an endless fountain of immortal drink, / Pouring unto us from the heaven’s brink.”

- **The bounty of the earth is imagined as a fountain.** A fountain is moving, not still; it gives water freely to anyone who comes near; and it does not run out.
- **The fountain is “endless”.** The supply of beauty is not limited. Sun, moon, trees, streams, musk-roses, tales: each is one stream from the same fountain, and the fountain keeps flowing.
- **The drink is “immortal”.** Whoever drinks of it is restored. The word also suggests that the source itself does not die; it carries on past one lifetime.
- **The fountain pours “unto us from the heaven’s brink”.** The water comes from the edge of heaven to the earth. Beauty therefore has a divine origin even when it appears in earthly forms (daffodils, streams, tales).
- **The image bookends the poem.** The opening promised that “a thing of beauty is a joy for ever”; the closing image makes that promise visible: a fountain at the edge of heaven pouring immortal water on the earth, day after day.

🔑 Exam Tip

For five-mark or six-mark questions on imagery, write the literal picture first (a fountain pouring water from heaven’s edge), then the figurative meaning (the earth’s beauty is an endless gift from the divine), and close with one line on why Keats chose this image over alternatives (a river would flow past, a well would have to be drawn from; a fountain freely pours, which fits Keats’s argument about beauty being freely available).

Final Answer: The poet compares the beautiful bounty of the earth to “an endless fountain of immortal drink, / Pouring unto us from the heaven’s brink”. The fountain image captures three claims of the poem at once: beauty is freely available, it is unlimited, and its source is heavenly.

EXPERT’S SOLUTION : *Dr Priya Ranganathan, PhD English Literature, University of Madras*

Alternative reading. The fountain image is doing structural work in the poem, not just decorative work. Read it as the counter-image to the opening word “despondence”.

- **Despondence is heavy and downward;** the fountain is light and upward-then-downward. Despondence pulls the spirit down; the fountain pours from heaven, lifting the spirit toward its source even as the water falls.
- **“Immortal drink” contrasts directly with the “pall”.** A pall is the cloth on a coffin; immortal drink is the liquid that gives life. The two images are the emotional

opposites of the poem.

- **“Pouring . . . from the heaven’s brink” suggests a generous, edge-of-heaven gift.** “Brink” suggests a boundary; the water spills over that boundary onto the earth. The earth therefore receives more than its share, which is exactly Keats’s view of beauty.
- **The fountain reframes the catalogue.** Each item in the earlier list (sun, moon, trees, daffodils, streams, musk-roses, mighty dead, tales) is now one jet of the same fountain. The catalogue does not list disconnected beautiful things; it shows where the single immortal water reaches.
- **The image is also kinetic.** “Pouring” is a present participle, like “wreathing” earlier in the poem. Beauty is not a static gift; it is a continuous action that the heavens are performing on us right now.

Why this matters. A board answer that explains both the literal picture and the structural function of the fountain image (opposite of the pall, ongoing pouring, source of the wreath) earns the full marks. Many students stop at the literal level; the expert answer reads the image inside the architecture of the whole poem.

Final Answer: The image is “an endless fountain of immortal drink, / Pouring unto us from the heaven’s brink”. The earth’s beauty is compared to a heavenly fountain whose water never runs out, whose source is divine, and whose pouring is continuous. The image bookends the poem and reverses the heaviness of the opening “despondence”.

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Key Takeaways

- “A Thing of Beauty” is the opening passage of John Keats’s long poem *Endymion* (1818), Book I; the central thesis is “a thing of beauty is a joy for ever”.
- Beauty’s loveliness “increases” with time and “will never / Pass into nothingness”; it leaves a lasting impression on the spirit, not a passing pleasure.
- The catalogue of beauty mixes nature (sun, moon, trees, daffodils, streams, musk-roses) with culture (the grandeur of the “mighty dead” and “all lovely tales we have heard or read”).
- Suffering is named in four items: despondence, the inhuman dearth of noble natures,

gloomy days, and unhealthy o'er-darkened ways.

- Beauty works against suffering by moving away the “pall” from our dark spirits; we “wreath a flowery band / To bind us to the earth”.
- Form: heroic couplets in iambic pentameter, AA BB CC rhyme; the extract is the opening of Endymion, Book I.
- The closing image is “an endless fountain of immortal drink, / Pouring unto us from the heaven’s brink”, which reverses the heaviness of “despondence” and seals the argument that beauty is a permanent, freely-given gift.

End of Think it out