

Investigate!

Hopkins: *The Starlight Night*

❖ **Setting the scene:**

Do you have any particular memories of a starlight night?

- Try to recall them in detail.

❖ **Going deeper:**

- Which Bible reference do you think is the nearer one?
 - There are still other Bible references to barns (Luke 12:18 for instance).
- What do the words 'Prayer, patience, alms, vows' convey to you?
- What exactly is the 'purchase' or the 'prize' referred to in l.8?

❖ **Themes:**

- People often 'compartmentalise' their experiences and beliefs.
 - Are you aware that you do this?
- How successful do you think Hopkins has been in breaking down the separate compartments of beauty and religious practice?
 - One way of judging poetically might be to ask yourself:

- o how well within ONE sonnet are the two component parts integrated;
- o or do the octave and sestet seem almost two different poems?

❖ **Imagery and Symbolism:**

- What metaphors does Hopkins use to convey a sense of value?
- What is the effect of the image of 'a farmyard scare'?

❖ **Language and tone:**

- What is the difference between a hyphenated phrase, and a straightforward adjective-noun phrase?
- What is the force of the interjections 'Ah well!' and 'What?'?

❖ **Structure and versification:**

- What effect is gained by the sestet rhyme scheme, do you think?
- Look for examples of internal rhyme.
- Can you scan ll.6 and 11?
- Try reading the poem out loud, making sure you don't hurry it and that you give the long syllables sufficient length.