Directions: Answer the following questions with a partner.

1. Read the “Build Background” box at the top of the page. How does this help you understand the term “Thanatopsis”? What does it tell you the poem is going to be about?

2. Why might Bryant describe Nature as being feminine (female) at the beginning of the poem? What are some advantages to Nature being like a woman than a man?

3. The author is speaking/narrating in the first stanza. What suggestion/piece of advice is giving the reader in this stanza [hint: he says that if you are ____________, do this: _______________)?

4. Why would his advice be seen as helpful to people during the Romantic period?

5. At line 17, Bryant says that “comes a still voice.” Then, in the second stanza, Nature begins to speak to you, the reader (Nature is the still voice). What is the main topic Nature is talking about in stanza two?

6. In stanza three, Nature says that you will not be alone in the ground. Who else (specifically) will you be with? (hint: look at the first few lines of the stanza).
7. At lines 48-50, Nature says, “All that tread/The globe are but a handful to the tribes/That slumber in its bosom.” What does this mean AND how is it meant to comfort you?

8. In lines 58-66, Nature tries to comfort people who are very lonely in life. What does it say that is supposed to comfort you?

9. The first stanza is Bryant talking to the reader. Then, Nature talks to you for the second and third stanzas. Bryant resumes speaking in the fourth (last) stanza. Why might he have used this structure in his poem?

10. What is Bryant’s (the narrator) advice to the reader at the end of the poem? (hint: what is he telling you in the last three lines)

12. Does Bryant’s poem alleviate your fears about death? Why or why not? (your opinion)

13. How does this poem represent elements of Romanticism based on your notes from yesterday?
Writing Task (with a partner):

–Create a 20 line poem about death. Incorporate at least THREE elements of American Romanticism in your poem.
  • Poem does not have to rhyme.
  • Each line must contain at least three words.
  • Poem should have a clear beginning and end.