

## Farewell to Barn and Stack and Tree Sample Answer

### NOTES

- Housman is said originally to have titled his book *The Poems of Terence Hearsay*.
- ***A Shropshire Lad*** is a collection of sixty-three poems by the English poet [Alfred Edward Housman](#), published in [1896](#).
- For [W. H. Auden](#) and his generation "no other poet seemed so perfectly to express the sensibility of a male adolescent"; and [George Orwell](#) remembered that, among his generation at [Eton College](#) in the wake of World War 1, "these were the poems which I and my contemporaries used to recite to ourselves, over and over, in a kind of ecstasy". They responded to Housman's lament for the ***transience of love, idealism and youth in what was in essence a half-imaginary pastoral countryside*** in a county only visited by him after he had begun writing the poems.

**Houseman, through his poem *Farewell to Barn and Stack and Tree* stresses his readers that conflicts between siblings can disrupt home life. Discuss.**

A.E. Houseman self-published his first poetry collection 'Shropshire lad' (1896) which is set in the pastoral landscape of the England countryside; the poems focus on themes such as despair, guilt and disruption of family life. Terence is a fictional character that is central to the poetry collection. In this essay I will explore how the conflict between the two brothers affect their fraternity, farm and family (mother).

It is suggested that the murder of Maurice may be due to a love triangle, but evidence seems to be meagre to support this claim. However, it can be assumed that the two brothers, even with their conflicts and disagreements, worked together as brothers and had a brotherly bond.

*The sun burns on the half-mown hill*

The hill is half-mown, suggesting that before the incident occurred, they were working together on the farm. This suggests unity; it was a usual day like any other, where they went on with the daily chores of the farm. The brother who murders Maurice regrets what he does. His guilt and the fact that he regrets having to leave his home prove this assertion.

His guilt is revealed through the repetition of the blood in his hands.

*'...a bloody hand to shake*

*My bloody hands and I'*

This may be a literal reference to the blood on his hands. However, it is without a doubt a reference also to the metaphorical blood on his hands – vis-à-vis his guilt. The repetition of the phrase suggests how profoundly moved he is by the guilt, not unlike Lady Macbeth whose guilt drove her mad until she ended up chanting 'out out damned spot!' This guilt suggests that he regrets having murdered his brother and informs us that it was not a premeditated attack but a reactionary deed done possibly in a paroxysm of anger. In this way, due to the conflict the brothers had, which was not resolved in any other way, their brotherhood is cut short and the brothers in the family are no more.

The mother is left all alone at the end of the day. The poet captures the emptiness and heartache which has not yet reached the mother with poetic brilliance, stating that

*'She had two sons at rising day*

*Ton-night she'll be alone.'*

This captures the life and love within the house when the two brothers lived there. As the sun rose, she had two sons – this pun suggests the warmth she felt from her sons and their love. It also connotes the care she received from them and the fact that they were the light of her life, and they were the hope she woke up to every morning. However, with the murder of the brother due to a conflict, she will end up with an empty house and unbearable pain in her heart. Because of their conflict and action the mother is the one who would suffer the most. Even though the speaker says that the empty plate will wait long for him, and that the dinner will be cold, it is the mother who would be waiting for him and missing the dead brother.

The speaker also captures how what is left of the family – the mother – will face a difficult situation in terms of finances as both able-bodied males in the family are now gone.

*Long for me the rick will wait,*

*And long will wait the fold.*

All the chores to be done at the farm house will be neglected because the brothers will not be there. The mother, who is left all alone would be helpless in this situation and may have to sell the farm or hire more people to work at the farm. This lack of family care and concern for the farm may end in financial ruin as the mother, who is getting older may be deceived and robbed. Therefore, the conflict between the brothers ends up further damaging the mother, who seems to be the only one remaining in the family.

It is not only the family that would be affected, but also friends who were familiar faces at their home. Terence seems to be someone who used to work with the brothers and probably knew them quite well.

*And I wish you luck come Lammastide*

The brother wishes Terence prosperity and strength as well as love. This proves that the relationship he had with this person was meaningful. They have shared hard work, joy, and pain. However, after the murder takes place, there will no longer be a friendship between the two as the brother leaves his home, never to return again.

Therefore, what is evident is that because of the conflict between the two brothers, the home was thrown into chaos. The mother will have to suffer as she has no one to take care of her, she has to bear the pain of losing her sons – one dead and the other missing, which makes it even worse as she would be waiting forever for his return, not knowing if she will ever see him again – and her farm will lack the manpower to be maintained. The bond between the brothers is cut short and their friendship with Terence is also lost due to the conflict which was not resolved in a reasonable manner.