

# Impressions of Keats

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**I**N THE POEM "Ode on a Grecian Urn" there is a reflection of the character of Keats. This reflection is made more remarkable by his life. He had always known poverty, hardship, and suffering. His health was bad because of his struggle for existence. With this kind of environment one would expect Keats to have a gloomy outlook on life.

But Keats was quite the opposite. His hardship seemed only to deepen his perception of beauty. Note his interpretations of the figures on the urn—a maiden never to lose her beauty, a lover never to lose his love, a tree never to lose its splendor, the musicians never to stop playing their ethereal melodies.

Yet upon closer examination one may detect a certain unhappiness in all this beauty. The lover will never reach the lips of his maiden fair. The tree will never bring forth its fruit and fulfill nature's cycle. And the melodious music of the musicians will never be heard by the ears of mortal man.

It seems as though Keats were saying, "My life has been drab, but I am able to see beauty all around me. This beauty is wonderful to behold, yet it saddens my heart. For how can I attain this beauty, this happiness? It is always just beyond the reach of my fingers, always ahead, driving me on to realms unknown."

However, I think Keats did find happiness. He found it in his search for beauty. He found it by reaching and climbing to heights unknown to other men. He lived in a dreamer's world, and in that world he found happiness and beauty.