Nothing Gold Can Stay

Nature's first green is gold,

Her hardest hue to hold.

Her early leaf's a flower;

But only so an hour.

Then leaf subsides to leaf.

So Eden sank to grief,

So dawn goes down to day.

Nothing gold can stay.

**Author:**

Years:

Places:

Careers:

Interesting Fact:

**Vocabulary**

Eden:

Hue:

Dawn:

Subsides:

**Poetic Devices**

Rhyme scheme:

Alliteration:

Figurative Language (paradox):

Imagery:

Allusion/Metaphor:

Symbol:

**Summarize the theme/moral of the poem:**

Ecclesiastes 1-2

Everything Is Meaningless

[**2**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/1-2.htm)“Everything is meaningless,” says the Teacher, “completely meaningless!”

[**3**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/1-3.htm)What do people get for all their hard work under the sun? [**4**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/1-4.htm)Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes. [**5**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/1-5.htm)The sun rises and the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again. [**6**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/1-6.htm)The wind blows south, and then turns north. Around and around it goes, blowing in circles. [**7**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/1-7.htm)Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea. [**8**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/1-8.htm)Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content.

[**9**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/1-9.htm)History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new. [**10**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/1-10.htm)Sometimes people say, “Here is something new!” But actually it is old; nothing is ever truly new. [**11**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/1-11.htm)We don’t remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now.

The Futility of Pleasure

[**1**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-1.htm)I said to myself, “Come on, let’s try pleasure. Let’s look for the ‘good things’ in life.” But I found that this, too, was meaningless. [**2**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-2.htm)So I said, “Laughter is silly. What good does it do to seek pleasure?” [**3**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-3.htm)After much thought, I decided to cheer myself with wine. And while still seeking wisdom, I clutched at foolishness. In this way, I tried to experience the only happiness most people find during their brief life in this world.

[**4**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-4.htm)I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards. [**5**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-5.htm)I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees. [**6**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-6.htm)I built reservoirs to collect the water to irrigate my many flourishing groves. [**7**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-7.htm)I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born into my household. I also owned large herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who had lived in Jerusalem before me. [**8**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-8.htm)I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire!

[**9**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-9.htm)So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me. [**10**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-10.htm)Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. [**11**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-11.htm)But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

The Wise and the Foolish

[**12**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-12.htm)So I decided to compare wisdom with foolishness and madness (for who can do this better than I, the king?[a](http://nlt.scripturetext.com/ecclesiastes/2.htm#footnotesa)). [**13**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-13.htm)I thought, “Wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness. [**14**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-14.htm)For the wise can see where they are going, but fools walk in the dark.” Yet I saw that the wise and the foolish share the same fate. [**15**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-15.htm)Both will die. So I said to myself, “Since I will end up the same as the fool, what’s the value of all my wisdom? This is all so meaningless!” [**16**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-16.htm)For the wise and the foolish both die. The wise will not be remembered any longer than the fool. In the days to come, both will be forgotten.

[**17**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-17.htm)So I came to hate life because everything done here under the sun is so troubling. Everything is meaningless—like chasing the wind.

The Futility of Work

[**18**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-18.htm)I came to hate all my hard work here on earth, for I must leave to others everything I have earned. [**19**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-19.htm)And who can tell whether my successors will be wise or foolish? Yet they will control everything I have gained by my skill and hard work under the sun. How meaningless! [**20**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-20.htm)So I gave up in despair, questioning the value of all my hard work in this world.

[**21**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-21.htm)Some people work wisely with knowledge and skill, then must leave the fruit of their efforts to someone who hasn’t worked for it. This, too, is meaningless, a great tragedy. [**22**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-22.htm)So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety? [**23**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-23.htm)Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest. It is all meaningless.

[**24**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-24.htm)So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God. [**25**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-25.htm)For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him?[b](http://nlt.scripturetext.com/ecclesiastes/2.htm" \l "footnotesb) [**26**](http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/2-26.htm)God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him. But if a sinner becomes wealthy, God takes the wealth away and gives it to those who please him. This, too, is meaningless—like chasing the wind.

**Example paraphrase of Robert Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay"**

In early springtime, gold flowers form on branches before the shoots of leaves take over the branches of a tree. These tiny gold flowers do not last long (because of the leaves that eventually form on the branches). Even the leaves eventually decay as all things seem to do: Eden, leaves, and a day. Beauty is short-lived and needs to be appreciated while it lasts.

What is lost in translation? What does the poem have that the paraphrase does not?

* Rhyme (sound)
* Meter (sound)
* Imagery
* Alliteration (sound)
* Economical phrasing
* Figurative language: paradox

**Rhyme Scheme: aabbccdd**

A *closed couplet* is two lines of rhymed verse in which the meaning is made complete by the end of the second rhyme.

Nature's first green is gold,  
Her hardest hue to hold.

Analysis of rhyme scheme: The "singsongy" rhyme belies the somber message that nothing lasts forever.

**Meter**

*Meter* is the formal measure of the natural rhythm of language as it falls into regular patterns of stress.

iambic trimeter: unstressed stressed rhythm with three stresses per line.   
  
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"So **dawn** goes **down** to **day**."

Analysis of iambic trimeter: The short three-beat rhythm to the lines create a limerick sound in this poem. But as always in the poetry of Robert Frost, what seems simple and upbeat has a darker tone and message. The poem confirms that nothing lasts forever and laments the world's acceptance of loss. The simple, quick meter, as in the rhyme scheme, masks this dark message.

**Imagery**

*Imagery* is the representation of sensory experience through language.

"early leaf's a flower"   
"Dawn goes down to day"

Analysis of imagery: The visual image of a tiny gold flower peeking out before the first signs of a leaf take over is a harbinger of spring. We easily miss its beauty because it is so small or because it lasts for such a short time. The image of dawn becoming day evokes the sight of early morning rays sifting through pink tinted clouds becoming harsher rays overhead. The loss of delicate light is lamented in the entrance to daytime. Both images give concrete illustrations of the ephemeral nature of the world's beauty.

**Alliteration**

This is the repetition of consonant sounds in the beginning of words to achieve a harsh or pleasing sound quality to the line or stanza.

"**g**reen is **g**old"   
"**h**er **h**ardest **h**ue to **h**old"   
"**d**awn goes **d**own to **d**ay"

Analysis of alliteration: The alliteration of the "g" sound in "green" and "gold" link these two words through sound. Not only does the poem assert that the first green is gold in meaning but it does so also in sound by echoing the sound of green with gold. Also, the alliteration of the "d" sound in "dawn," "down," and "day" makes these words stand out to the reader's ear. The emphasis in sound and in meaning is that the light of dawn goes down or is lost to the harsh light of day.

**Economical Phrasing**

This poem expresses complex ideas in a succinct manner.

Analysis of economical phrasing: "So Eden sank to grief" means flowers' buds blooming in the spring before leaves have formed on the trees are ephemeral like Eden in all its splendor before Adam and Eve broke God's commandment, Eden fell from paradise, and everyone grieved. The short phrase says all this in a pithy, curt way that is more memorable and effective.

**Paradox**

*Paradox* is a statement containing seemingly contradictory or incompatible elements.

Analysis of paradox: "Nature's first green is gold" How can green be gold? "Her early leaf's a flower" How can a leaf be a flower? Well, both statements are true. Nature's first sign of life is a gold flower in spring and not green leaves. And a tree's first sign of a leaf is actually a tiny flower. What seemed incongruous turns out to be true.

**Conclusion**

With a rhyme scheme, iambic trimeter, illustrative imagery, alliteration, economical phrasing, and paradox, "Nothing Gold Can Stay" becomes a memorable poem for its deceiving simplicity and rich poetic composition. The poetic devices are "lost in translation" in the paraphrase and so is the poem itself.