# Poetry: Between The Lines – Bright Star by John Keats

**ABC ME screening details:** Friday May 15, 2020 1:30pm

This episode can also be viewed on [ABC iView](https://iview.abc.net.au/show/poetry-between-the-lines).

**Key learning areas:** English

**Level:** Stage 6

**About:** Hip-Hop star Akala explores John Keats' poem 'Bright Star' with the poet Daljit Nagra. They discuss how the poem focuses on the transient nature of life and eternal nature of love.

## Before the episode

This text is a prescribed text for Advanced Module A: Textual conversations in the [NSW syllabus for the Australian curriculum English Advanced Stage 6 syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/stage-6-learning-areas/stage-6-english/english-advanced-2017) (© 2019 NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales).

The sonnet, ‘Bright Star’, by John Keats was written around 1819. It was composed during a time when Keats was dying of tuberculosis. The poem reveals the impact and reflection on the process of time, the fleeting nature of life and our own mortality in comparison with the natural world. The majesty and power of the natural world is contrasted with the frailty, tenderness and intimacy of human love and life.

Module A: Textual Conversations requires an exploration of the connection between the suite of poetry and Jane Campion’s 2009 film ‘Bright Star’. The film depicts the final three years of Keats’ life and provides contemporary audiences with a representation of his life and the Romantic period. For this episode students will be required to delve deeply into the ideas explored within the sonnet.

1. Read the poem prior to viewing the episode (Read the poem prior to viewing the episode ([Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art” by John Keats](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44468/bright-star-would-i-were-stedfast-as-thou-art) © 2020 Poetry Foundation).
2. Research the Romantic period and John Keats. Identify some of the significant contextual influences for the poem.
3. Thinking about 19th century Romantic values identify examples of this influence within the poem.
4. Thinking about the film and your engagement with this text and its context, does this poem resonate with Campion’s ‘Bright Star’ or is it a dissonance of ideals?

## During the episode

1. Make a list of the language devices that are analysed within the episode.
2. List 4 key features from the poem identified by Daljit Nagra in the episode.
3. Create a mind map representing the ideas and values explored in this episode and presented in the poem.

After the episode

1. The religious allusions in the poem such as, ‘Eremite’, ‘priest like’ and ‘ablution’ denote more than just religious allegories, as the Romantics used religion as a comparison with nature. Explain why you think Keats has used religion as a vehicle for making meaning, specifically, in relation to those terms from the poem.
2. The word ‘sublime’ is mentioned in the episode. Evaluate this term in relation to your knowledge of the Romantics and the connection to the poem (hint, you may wish to consider the idea of ‘the sublime’ in Romanticism).
3. Explain how the mode of poetry, specifically the Elizabethan sonnet, creates meaning and evokes an emotive response.
4. Explore how the conversation between the film and the poem impact on the meaning created for a 21st century audience.
5. The repetition of language is significant in this poem, explain its purpose and impact.
6. The opening stanza contains grand statements with the later stanzas shifting to intimate personal language. How does Keats create this shift whilst still engaging his audience?
7. The Romantic elements of the poem are discussed in this episode. Identify the 3 mentioned and explain how they are evident in the suite of poems in this module.
8. This is a pivotal poem in the exploration of the conversations between the texts in Module A: Textual Conversations. Explore the significant connection between this sonnet, the film and the other poems set for study within the module.
9. Evaluate how Campion’s depiction and reframing of the Romantic period has been influenced Keats’ poetry. Explore how the film mirrors, aligns with and/or collides with Keats’ context and poetry. You must explore at least two poems.

**Follow-up activity:** Extended responses

# NSW Teacher Notes

This is an optional standalone resource that could supplement student learning. The activities align with syllabus outcomes across stages and can be modified to meet the needs of your students. Students can complete the activities while learning at home and in the classroom. All activities can be completed without access to the internet or a device. Teachers could collect student work to offer feedback and as evidence of learning.

## Learning intentions

* Utilise textual evidence to support personal interpretation of a text
* Utilise research to inform the construction of a personal response to a suite of texts in relation to the ideas presented within a syllabus module

## NSW English Standard Stage 6 Syllabus outcomes

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| Objectives | Stage 6 |
| Use language to shape and make meaning according to purpose, audience and context | student critically analyses and uses language forms, features and structures of texts justifying appropriateness for specific purposes, audiences and contexts and evaluates their effects on meaning (EA12-3 A) |
| Think in ways that are imaginative, creative, interpretive and critical | investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts (EA12-6) |

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