

[William Butler \(W.B.\) Yeats](#) wrote the poem which consistently tops the list of Ireland's favorite poems. It is called "The Lake Isle of Innisfree."

*I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee;
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.*

*And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.*

*I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.*

In his autobiography, Yeats tells us how he came to pen this still-loved poem about [Innisfree](#), an uninhabited island in [Lough Gill](#) (located in [County Sligo](#)).



The Irishman was in London, missing home, when he saw and heard something which inspired him. Here is his recollection (split into paragraphs for easier online reading):

I had still the ambition, formed in Sligo in my teens, of living in imitation of Thoreau on Innisfree, a little island in Lough Gill, and when walking through [Fleet Street](#) very homesick I heard a little tinkle of water and saw a fountain in a shop-window which balanced a little ball upon its jet, and began to remember lake water.

From the sudden remembrance came my poem "Innisfree," my first lyric with anything in its rhythm of my own music. I had begun to loosen rhythm as an escape from rhetoric and from that emotion of the crowd that rhetoric brings, but I only understood vaguely and occasionally that I must for my special purpose use nothing but the common syntax.

A couple of years later I could not have written that first line with its conventional archaism -- "Arise and go" -- nor the inversion of the last stanza. ([The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats, Volume III, Autobiographies](#), by W.B. Yeats, Chapter XV, [page 139](#))

To hear an example of Yeats' lyrics put to music, listen to a song by Joseph Sobol (sung by Kathy Cowan, with Tom Orf and Joseph Sobol, Andrew Bird, violin, Beth Falcone, piano, Willy Schwartz, accordion, Al Ehrich, bass) drawn from a two-CD set of Yeats' poetry set to original music: "[In the Deep Heart's Core, vol. 1: I am of Ireland](#)," Kiltartan Road Music, 2004.

To hear an Irish song which uses a piece of Yeats' title, beautifully [sung by Órla Fallon](#) (formerly of Celtic Woman), watch this embedded YouTube video.

We can also hear a reading of the famous poem by Yeats himself.

Credits:

"The Lake Isle of Innisfree," by W.B. Yeats. Read by Carole Bos.

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Isle of Innisfree

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