

# Prometheus Unbound

--Percy Bysshe Shelley

(excerpt from Book IV)

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;  
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone Life; Joy, Empire, and Victory!



## NOTES:

*What is striking about this section of the larger poem is its reliance upon movement. This movement is most notably signified by the use of the preposition "to." The movement is toward something beyond that which is present. This energy of motion is signified through the use of repetition. The sheer numbers of the use of the preposition "to" both stated and implied is boggling. A numerical accounting yields seven direct uses and seven indirect or silent, elliptical uses. That's fourteen movements for the reader to contemplate within nine short lines of poetry. Its use is beyond forceful and is what creates the energy and motivation behind this fragment. It also serves to put the reader directly into the stream of the poem. We can't keep ourselves from experiencing a rapid heartbeat and surge of emotion, seeing ourselves as the subject of the cry. It's as good a "pep" talk as any I've heard delivered.*

*Add to this repetition the final line "This is alone Life; Joy, Empire, and Victory!" and we see even more elliptical repetition--the line should read "This is alone Life; this alone is Joy, this alone is Empire, and this alone is Victory!" But by leaving the reader the duty to continue the repetition and become part owner of the idea and the movement toward defiant greatness, even as Prometheus does, Shelley is obtaining that rare and seldom realized goal for the poet--to join the reader with the poem.*

*Notice also how the rhyme scheme ( **aabccbddd** ) is blurred and even lost because of the repetition. We almost don't notice the rhyme, a rhyme made unusual by its slight break from convention. The strength of the rhyme is found in the third line. The b line rhymes (line 3 and 6) stand out because they are separated from one another which causes some emphasis upon them. Looking closely both lines contain the two negative statements which run counter to the rest of the poem, which is built upon positive flow.*

*The poem also employs the use of apostrophe as it addresses the Titan Prometheus., yet this apostrophe is almost an afterthought as we are the real target. We are meant to be motivated to become the strength and power represented by the Promethean myth.*

### Possible Claim:



***Percy Shelley's highly integrated and sophisticated use of repetition in this excerpt from his poem "Prometheus Unbound" places the reader directly into the stream of the poem, serving as a rallying call to hope and triumph.***

