



## BACKGROUND

**Anne Bradstreet** (1612–1672) was one of the first poets in the American colonies and the first woman in the colonies to gain recognition for her work. She had given up a life of wealth in England to follow her father and husband to the wild, unsettled colonies of New England. Much of her poetry focuses on her internal struggle between desiring the pleasures of the world and focusing on the promise of heaven. On the date referenced in the title of this poem, Bradstreet's home was destroyed by a fire.



# HERE FOLLOW SOME VERSES UPON THE BURNING OF OUR HOUSE, JULY 10th, 1666

Poem by Anne Bradstreet

## SETTING A PURPOSE

As you read, note the details that show how Bradstreet's focus shifts from what she has lost to what she believes is more important.

In silent night when rest I took  
For sorrow near I did not look  
I wakened was with thund'ring noise  
And piteous shrieks of dreadful voice.  
5 That fearful sound of "Fire!" and "Fire!"  
Let no man know is my desire.

I, starting up, the light did spy,  
And to my God my heart did cry  
To strengthen me in my distress  
10 And not to leave me succorless.<sup>1</sup>  
Then, coming out, beheld a space  
The flame consume my dwelling place.

<sup>1</sup> **succorless** (sŭk'ər-lis): without help or relief.

## Notice & Note

Use the side margins to notice and note signposts in the text.

## ANALYZE VOICE

**Annotate:** Mark words that suggest a contrast in lines 1–6.

**Analyze:** What is happening in these lines? How does the diction convey the urgency of the situation?



## NOTICE & NOTE

### ANALYZE ALLUSIONS

**Annotate:** Mark the words in lines 13–18 that match the allusion identified in the footnote.

**Draw Conclusions:** Why do you think the poet includes an allusion to the story of Job?

### PARAPHRASE

**Annotate:** Recall that **inverted syntax** refers to sentence structure in which the expected order of words is reversed. Mark an example of inverted syntax in lines 25–30.

**Paraphrase:** Create a paraphrase of the example of inverted syntax you marked.

And when I could no longer look,  
I blest His name that gave and took,<sup>2</sup>  
15 That laid my goods now in the dust:  
Yea, so it was, and so 'twas just.  
It was His own, it was not mine,  
Far be it that I should repine;<sup>3</sup>

He might of all justly bereft,  
20 But yet sufficient for us left.  
When by the ruins oft I past,  
My sorrowing eyes aside did cast,  
And here and there the places spy  
Where oft I sat and long did lie:

25 Here stood that trunk and there that chest,  
There lay that store I counted best.  
My pleasant things in ashes lie,  
And them behold no more shall I.  
Under thy roof no guest shall sit,  
30 Nor at thy table eat a bit.

No pleasant tale shall e'er be told,  
Nor things recounted done of old.  
No candle e'er shall shine in thee,  
Nor bridegroom's voice e'er heard shall be.  
35 In silence ever shalt thou lie;  
Adieu, Adieu, all's vanity.<sup>4</sup>

Then straight I 'gin my heart to chide,<sup>5</sup>  
And did thy wealth on earth abide?  
Didst fix thy hope on mold'ring<sup>6</sup> dust?  
40 The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?  
Raise up thy thoughts above the sky  
That dunghill mists away may fly.

Thou hast an house on high erect,  
Framed by that mighty Architect,  
45 With glory richly furnishéd,<sup>7</sup>  
Stands permanent though this be fled.

<sup>2</sup> I . . . took: an allusion to Job 1:21 in the Bible—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

<sup>3</sup> repine: to complain or fret; to long for something.

<sup>4</sup> all's vanity: an allusion to Ecclesiastes 1:2 in the Bible—"All is vanity," meaning that all is temporary and meaningless.

<sup>5</sup> chide: to scold mildly so as to correct or improve.

<sup>6</sup> mold'ring: crumbling, disintegrating, decaying.

<sup>7</sup> Thou . . . furnishéd: an allusion to John 14:2–3 in the Bible, where Jesus assures his disciples that, even if they have nothing in this life, there are mansions prepared for them in heaven.



It's purchaséd and paid for too  
By Him who hath enough to do.

A price so vast as is unknown  
50 Yet by His gift is made thine own;  
There's wealth enough, I need no more,  
Farewell, my pelf,<sup>8</sup> farewell my store.  
The world no longer let me love,  
My hope and treasure lies above.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> **pelf**: wealth or riches, especially when dishonestly acquired.

<sup>9</sup> **treasure . . . above**: an allusion to Matthew 13:44–46, which relates how heavenly treasures are safe from thieves and destruction.

### ANALYZE VOICE

**Annotate**: Mark words in the final stanzas that suggest a change in voice.

**Compare**: How does the poet's choice of words differ at the end of the poem from that of the beginning?

### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer these questions before moving on to the **Analyze the Text** section on the following page.

- 1 What is the speaker's first response to hearing the "fearful sound" of fire?
  - A She looked for water.
  - B She prayed for strength.
  - C She gathered her belongings.
  - D She started to scream.
- 2 The lines *When by the ruins oft I past, / My sorrowing eyes aside did cast* emphasize that the speaker —
  - F is struggling to let go of her home
  - G is glad her house burned down
  - H is watching the house be rebuilt
  - J no longer wants to have a house
- 3 What conclusion helps the poet overcome her sorrow?
  - A Her family is still around her.
  - B She has started to build anew.
  - C She knows heaven will be her home.
  - D She replaces sorrow with anger.