William Blake’s volume of poetry entitled Songs of Innocence and Experience is the embodiment of his belief that innocence and experience were “the two contrary states of the human soul,” and that true innocence was impossible without experience. Songs of Innocence contains poems either written from the perspective of children or written about them. Many of the poems appearing in Songs of Innocence have a counterpart in Songs of Experience, with quite a different perspective of the world.

The disastrous end of the French Revolution caused Blake to lose faith in the goodness of mankind, explaining much of the despair found in Songs of Experience. Blake also believed that children lost their innocence through exploitation and from a religious community which put dogma before mercy. He did not, however, believe that children should be kept from becoming experienced entirely. In truth, he believed that children should indeed become experienced but through their own discoveries, which is reflected in a number of these poems. (Summary adapted from Wikipedia by Annie Coleman)

Read by Annie Coleman, Denny Sayers, Chip, Marian Brown, & Gord Mackenzie.

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