Ms BT’s - Poetry
William Butler Yeats
Irish Revival

I love Ireland!
William Butler Yeats

• Born in Dublin, Ireland, 1865
• Poet, playwright, philosopher
• Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923
• Well known for symbolism employed in his poetry
Introductory Notes

• The Second Coming suggests that the Second Coming of Christ will bring about a state of anarchy on earth instead of bringing good will

• The title is derived from the Bible – Matthew 24 and Saint John’s description of the Beast of the Apocalypse in Revelation

• Stanza 1: conditions present in the world: anarchy, things falling apart

• Stanza 2: proposes that these conditions foretell of a monstrous Second Coming
Yeat’s was part of the Irish or Celtic Revival also known as the Irish Literary Revival and Irish Literary Renaissance

• Yeats was an Irish and British Literary figure

• He was a strong political nationalist, connecting with his Irish and Celtic past

• The image of the Cross symbol to the right (shows a circle and cross; this is a mix of Jesus and the Pagan Son god)
Yeats looked back for enlightenment to Irish Druidism and folk tales

- Druid belief comes from Celtic/Gaelic religion or ideology
- A Druid was a member of the educated professional class
- Druids were law speakers, poets, philosophers, and doctors
- The Romans accused the Druids of human sacrifices, but there are no chronicles of this outside of biased Roman accounts
There were many wide-scale changes in Western society:

- Modern industrial societies experienced the wealthy buying up farms, rapid city growth, factories, population growth centering in cities, and the horrors of war.

So Modernists like William Yeats…

- Rejected the *certainty* of Enlightenment thinkers (who believed in liberty, tolerance, and progress)
- Rejected religious beliefs
Irish Modernists were drawn to Celtic and Gaelic ways: Neo Druidism

- Neo Druidism was a new form of spirituality or religion that generally promoted harmony and worship of nature
- It was a respect for all beings including the environment
- Many forms of Druidry are Neopagan and have some similarities with our environmentalists
Yeats fed off this rise of Nationalism

His writing

• Poetry, art, songs, folktales

• Yeats was a dramatist, a poet, and a prose writer who protested against the Modern or Enlightened world

THE SECOND COMING

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: a waste of desert sand;
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Wind shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again but now I know