

You making haste, haste on decay: not blameworthy; life is  
5 good, be it stubbornly long or suddenly  
A mortal splendor: meteors are not needed less than  
mountains: shine, perishing republic.

But for my children, I would have them keep their distance  
from the thickening center; corruption  
Never has been compulsory, when the cities lie at the  
monster's feet there are left the mountains.

And boys, be in nothing so moderate as in love of man, a  
clever servant, insufferable master.  
There is the trap that catches noblest spirits, that caught—  
10 they say—God, when he walked on earth.

## MAKING MEANINGS


### First Thoughts

1. What thoughts or feelings did you have about the speaker's advice in the last stanza? In what ways is this advice quite the opposite of "love thy neighbor"?

### Shaping Interpretations

2. The first stanza contains an **implied metaphor**. What is America compared to? What does "vulgarity" mean here, and why does the republic thicken to *empire*?
3. What attitude toward America does the second stanza express?
4. What is the speaker's attitude in the last stanza? Do you think he really means what he says in line 9?
5. What does the speaker seem to think is the cause of the republic's condition?

### Connecting with the Text

6. Review the Quickwrite you wrote before reading the poem. Did the poem make you rethink any of your responses? Explain. 
7. If it were possible, would you like to take the speaker aside and instill a little optimism in him or her? What would you tell the speaker?

## CHOICES: Building Your Portfolio

### Writer's Notebook


#### 1. Collecting Ideas for an Analysis of Causes and Effects

Brainstorm a list of possible topics suggested by Jeffers's poem: why a civilization might decay, why someone would choose to live apart from society, why someone would feel as Jeffers does about America. Save your notes for possible use in the Writer's Workshop on page 685.



### Critical Writing

#### 2. Taking Stock

This poem was published in 1925.  In a brief essay, explain why you think Jeffers's view of the condition of American society is or is not still valid. Summarize the view expressed in the poem. Then tell whether or not you think this view applies to contemporary America. Support your position with specific references to the poem and to contemporary life.