

This Is the Dark Time, My Love

Matthew Williams • English Literature • March 18, 2026

This Is the Dark Time, My Love

This is the dark time, my love,

Analysis: The repetition "This is the dark time, my love" establishes a persistent state of oppression. The phrase "my love" personalizes the suffering, suggesting both intimacy and a symbolic connection to the homeland itself.

All round the land brown beetles crawl about.

Analysis: The metaphor "brown beetles" dehumanizes the soldiers, presenting them as pests or an infestation. This implies they are numerous, invasive, and destructive, stripping them of individuality and moral legitimacy.

The shining sun is hidden in the sky

Analysis: The symbolism "shining sun" represents hope, freedom, and clarity. Its concealment suggests these ideals are being suppressed, reinforcing the idea of a nation plunged into darkness.

Red flowers bend their heads in awful sorrow.

Analysis: The personification "flowers bend their heads in awful sorrow" gives nature human grief, suggesting that suffering is so widespread it affects even the environment. The symbolism "red flowers" evokes blood and death, linking nature directly to violence.

This is the dark time, my love,

Analysis: The repetition "This is the dark time, my love" reinforces that this condition dominates all aspects of life. It is not momentary but ongoing and inescapable.

It is the season of oppression, dark metal, and tears.

Analysis: The symbolism "dark metal" represents weapons and military machinery. Referring to oppression as a "season" suggests it is prolonged and cyclical, embedding suffering into the fabric of daily life.

It is the festival of guns, the carnival of misery.

Analysis: The oxymoron "festival of guns" and oxymoron "carnival of misery" juxtapose celebration with violence and suffering. This shows how normal life has been grotesquely distorted under oppression.

Everywhere the faces of men are strained and anxious.

Analysis: The imagery reflects widespread psychological distress. The suffering is collective, affecting the entire population rather than isolated individuals.

Who comes walking in the dark night time?

Analysis: The rhetorical question "Who comes walking in the dark night time?" builds suspense and introduces an unseen, threatening presence.

Whose boot of steel tramps down the slender grass?

Analysis: The metaphor "boot of steel" represents military force and oppression, while "slender grass" symbolizes fragility and innocence. The image conveys power violently crushing the vulnerable.

It is the man of death, my love, the strange invader

Analysis: The personification "man of death" transforms death into a conscious, deliberate force. This makes oppression feel intentional and invasive rather than abstract.

Watching you sleep and aiming at your dream.

Analysis: The metaphor "aiming at your dream" represents the destruction of hope, freedom, and future aspirations. The threat is not only physical but psychological, targeting the very idea of possibility.

About the poem

Author: Martin Carter (1927–1997)

Context: Written during the British suspension of constitutional government in Guyana, 1953

Core idea: Oppression under colonial rule destroys not only physical freedom but also hope, identity, and the future of a nation.

- **Main themes**
- Colonialism and domination
- War and violence
- Oppression and control
- Death and destruction
- Loss of hope and identity
- Psychological fear and surveillance
- **Mood:** Gloomy and oppressive, creating a constant sense of fear, tension, and suffocation
- **Tone:** Mournful, intimate, foreboding, and politically charged

Remember

- Carter uses **metaphor and symbolism** to transform soldiers into an infestation and weapons into oppressive forces
- Nature reflects human suffering through **personification**, showing total environmental and emotional collapse
- The poem escalates from atmosphere to direct threat through the "man of death"
- "Aiming at your dream" is the thesis. Oppression destroys future possibility, not just present life