**On Virtue\*** By [Phillis Wheatley](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/phillis-wheatley) \*showing strong moral beliefs

O thou bright jewel in my aim I strive

To comprehend thee. Thine own words declare

Wisdom is higher than a fool can reach.

I cease to wonder, and no more attempt

5 Thine height t’explore, or fathom\* thy profound\*. \*explore \*depths

But, O my soul, sink not into despair,

*Virtue* is near thee, and with gentle hand.

Would now embrace thee, hovers o’er thine head.

Fain\* would the heaven-born soul with her converse, \*with pleasure, gladly

10 Then seek, then court her for her promised bliss.

Auspicious\* queen, thine heavenly pinions\* spread, \*fortunate or lucky \*part of feather that allows flight

And lead celestial\* *Chastity* along; \*heavenly

Lo! now her sacred retinue\* descends, \*group of advisors for someone important

Arrayed\* in glory from the orbs above. \*dressed

15 Attend me, *Virtue*, thro’ my youthful years!

O leave me not to the false joys of time!

But guide my steps to endless life and bliss.

*Greatness*, or *Goodness*, say what I shall call thee,

To give an higher appellation\* still, \*name

20 Teach me a better strain, a nobler lay\*, \*job, position

O Thou, enthroned with Cherubs\* in the realms of day! \*angels

SPEAKER: Who is it what is their message? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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OCASSION: Published before her emancipation, Wheatley here is reflecting on her time as a slave and trying to align that fact to her spiritual faith.

AUDIENCE: Who is this directed to? Who would read this? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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PURPOSE: To proclaim her faith and demonstrate how that can lead her down a moral path, a path for which she sees in “in [her] aim” and to which she “strive[s]” (1).

SUBJECT: What is this about? What are they actually saying? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

TONE: Author’s Attitude \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING ANALYSIS: Address **the second half of the poem** in a paragraph. Incorporate quotes in your analysis.

The speaker in “On Virtue” strives to “comprehend” virtue, and addresses her poem to a personification of the trait (2). She understands that, in trying to understand what virtue is, she gets closer to it and that it will lead her with a “gentle hand” (7). She reminds herself to not “despair” if she fails to fully understand virtue (6). But if she is not trying to fully understand virtue, what, then, is her ultimate goal?

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