“We’ll Go No More A-Roving”
George Gordon, Lord Byron (January 22, 1788 - April 19, 1824, English)

So, we’ll go no more a roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we’ll go no more a roving
By the light of the moon.

About the Author: Lord Byron was an English poet and leading figure in the Romantic Movement. His most famous works include Don Juan and “She Walks in Beauty”. He was living in Venice, Italy when he wrote “So We’ll Go No More A-Roving”. He fought in the Greek War of Independence, and died a year later.

Pre-Reading:
Prove some background information on the Romantic Movement: This movement in poetry and other forms of art was popular in 19th century Europe. Natural, emotional, and personal themes are common in Romantic poetry. Lord Byron was one of the most famous poets of the Romantic era and is considered by many to be the first “celebrity”. Lord Byron was fond of excess, drinking, and partying. He wrote this poem in a letter to his friend Thomas Moore in 1817, following Carnival, a period of much party and celebration in Italy.

Ask students what words they associate with celebrities. What do they predict “roving” means in the context of the poem?

Pre-teach difficult vocabulary: roving, outwears, sheath

Reading:
Have students read the poem silently to themselves for the first time through. After, the teacher or a student volunteer may recite the poem.

Analysis and Discussion Questions:
There are many references to light and dark in the poem. Have students find the words that relate to this theme of night and brightness. What could this imagery mean? The night imagery in the poem seems to have a few different meanings: both the literal, as the best time for “roving”, and the figurative, that the author is feeling he is approaching the “nighttime” in his own life.

What themes do the students find in the poem? This poem is often interpreted as someone growing older, and getting tired of the activities they once enjoyed. What metaphors (a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in
order to suggest a resemblance) does Byron create to describe this phenomenon?

Ask students if there are activities that used to be fun for them that they no longer enjoy. What are they? What happened? How does that feel when you recognize that you no longer enjoy something you used to?

Is the speaker talking to somebody else, or is he talking to himself? Have students explain their answers through think-pair-share (think about the question individually, then discuss with a partner, then share with the class).

Which word do you think best describes the narrator's emotion in the poem: carefree, regretful, self-critical, resigned. Explain your answer.

Optional Activities:
Have students write a letter to their past selves. What would they say? What advice would they give? Would they tell their past selves about the things that they no longer enjoy in their older age?

Have students draw a picture of themselves in 10 years. Where are they? What are they doing? Is there anything that they enjoy now that they hope they will still enjoy in the future? Depict those things in the picture, too.

Listen to Leonard Cohen's version of this poem as a song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CvibYDSNMM What emotions do you think the singer is feeling? Does it match how you felt reading the poem?