Thankfulness and wistfulness, joy and sadness, fullness and loss, gathering in and purging away, fruitfulness and decay, gentle light and approaching darkness,– these themes are reflected in poetry for the season of Autumn …..

O Autumn, laden with fruit,

and stain'd with the blood of the grape,

pass not, but sit beneath my shady roof;

there thou may'st rest, and tune thy jolly voice to my fresh pipe,

and all the daughters of the year shall dance!

Sing now the lusty song of fruits and flowers.

*(Verses from “To Autumn” – William Blake)*

Beautiful leaves of Autumn,

with the sunset hues they vie;

gems for the glorious setting

of the pale and pensive sky.

Bright as the flaming opals,

that gleam in the amber West,

is the Autumn's rich creation

of gold and amethyst.

Beautiful leaves of Autumn,

they are robed for an early bier;

destined to fade and wither

on the grave of the dying year.

and a strange sweet theme of sadness,

with their gorgeous splendour weaves

for all, yes all that is earthly

doth fade like the Autumn leaves

*(verses from Autumn Leaves - Martha Lavinia Hoffman)*

Go, sit upon the lofty hill,  
and turn your eyes around,  
where waving woods and waters wild  
do hymn an autumn sound.  
The summer sun is faint on them —  
the summer flowers depart —  
sit still — as all transform’d to stone,  
except your musing heart.  
  
Youth fades; and then, the joys of youth,  
which once refresh’d our mind,  
shall come — as, on those sighing woods,  
the chilling autumn wind.

Hear not the wind — view not the woods;  
look out o’er vale and hill —  
in spring, the sky encircled them —  
the sky is round them still.  
Come autumn’s scathe — come winter’s cold —  
some change — and human fate!  
whatever prospect Heaven doth bound,  
can ne’er be desolate.

*(Verses from “The Autumn” – Elizabeth Barratt Browning)*

The acrid scents of autumn,

reminiscent of slinking beasts,

make me fear Everything,

tear-trembling stars of autumn

and the snore of the night in my ear.

For suddenly, flush-fallen,

all my life, in a rush

of shedding away,

has left me Naked, exposed on the bush.

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| *(Verses from “The Dolor of Autumn” – DH Lawrence )* |
| Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is: what if my leaves are falling like its own! The tumult of thy mighty harmonies  Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone, sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce, my spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!  Drive my dead thoughts over the universe like wither’d leaves to quicken a new birth! and, by the incantation of this verse,  scatter, as from an unextinguish’d hearth ashes and sparks, my words among mankind! be through my lips to unawaken’d earth |

*(Verses from “Ode to the west wind” - Percy Bysshe Shelly)*

**Autumn Equinox and Michaelmas**

**The annunciation of John by Gabriel to Zachariah. Luke 1:5-20 falls at the Autumn Equinox – Zachariah’s doubt leads to his falling silent until Mid-Summer -**

**Michaelmas was also associated with the Equinox and was traditionally one of the quarter days when debts were settled and workers hired. It marked the end of the harvest for many, hence the date people where paid hired and fired. Also the start of term following the harvest.**

**Often a Goose, fed on the stubble of the field was given as payment to the landlord and traditionally Goose was eaten, hence the goose fairs of this time of year.**

**As the dark part of the year is entered thoughts turn to the need for protection from the forces of darkness and also the need for food and prosperity in winter, hence the following protection prayer**

**‘prosperity of family, Mystery of Michael, Protection of the Trinity’**

**St Michael’s churches are often in places that the Devil’s power was feared – coming from water (hence St Michael’s mount) or the underworld (as on Glastonbury Tor)**

**It was believed that blackberries could not be picked after Michaelmas because the Devil fell on them when cast out of heaven by Michael hence the following**

**‘On Michaelmas Day the devil puts his foot on blackberries’**

The moods and themes of the season of Autumn have always chimed with the moods and seasons of our human lives -