

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard Literary Device

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Figures of Speech

Imagery

- **Definition:** Imagery is a figure of speech where the poet uses vivid and descriptive language to create clear pictures in the reader's mind.
- **Example:** "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day."
- **Explanation:** The poet describes the evening bell, the fading light, and the sound of cattle to create a clear scene of a quiet rural evening.
- **Effect:** It evokes a sense of death, silence, and the village atmosphere. It deepens the poem's melancholy and reflective tone.

Apostrophe

- **Definition:** An Apostrophe is a figure of speech in which the poet directly addresses an absent person, an imaginary being, or an abstract idea.
- **Example:** "For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead..."
- **Explanation:** The poet speaks directly to the person who remembers the forgotten dead, even though that person is not present.
- **Effect:** It makes the poem more emotional and intimate, as if the reader is drawn into the scene.

Metonymy

- **Definition:** Metonymy occurs when the poet uses a word closely related to something instead of its actual name.
- **Example:** "The short and simple annals of the poor."
- **Explanation:** Here, "annals" or "history" is used to mean the simple life stories of the poor villagers.
- **Effect:** It highlights the humble beauty and value of common people's lives.

Hyperbole

- **Definition:** Hyperbole is a deliberate exaggeration used for emphasis or effect.
- **Example:** “Full many a gem of purest ray serene...”
- **Explanation:** By exaggerating with an image of hidden gems in the ocean, the poet shows how many talents in society remain unseen.
- **Effect:** It makes the loss of unrecognized talent deeply emotional and powerful.

Symbolism / Symbols

- **Definition:** Symbolism is a poetic device in which an object, scene, situation, or character represents a deeper idea, emotion, or philosophy beyond its literal meaning. In “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,” Thomas Gray uses powerful symbols to express themes of life, death, forgetfulness, human dignity, and the passage of time.
- **The Churchyard:** Symbol of death, silence, the cycle of life, and the final equality of all humans. The churchyard is the central symbol of the poem. Here, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, the famous and the unknown all lie beneath the same earth. It shows that death erases all differences and brings every person to the same humble truth.
- **The Curfew Bell:** Symbol of the end of the day and the end of life. The bell that rings at sunset not only marks the closing of the day but also symbolizes the twilight of human life. Just as evening brings darkness, old age and death bring silence to life.
- **The Plowman:** Symbol of labor, simplicity, and the daily routine of common people. The plowman returning home after work represents the peaceful close of a hardworking day. He symbolizes the humble truth of life and the steady struggle of ordinary people.
- **The Owl:** Symbol of loneliness, mystery, the silence of death, and nature’s mourning. The owl’s mournful cry deepens the poem’s sad tone. It acts like a guardian of the night, silently witnessing the pain and stories of the dead.
- **The Village Graves:** Symbol of untold stories, forgotten lives, and unfulfilled dreams. Under each grave lies a life that once loved, worked, and dreamed but left no name behind. These graves represent the unseen and unrecorded lives of common people whose stories remain unheard.