

Sonnet 73: That time of year thou mayst in me behold

Literary Device

Writer: William Shakespeare | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Figures of Speech

Metaphor

- **Definition:** A Metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two different things by saying that one thing is the other (without using “like” or “as”).
- **Example:** *“That time of year thou mayst in me behold*

When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang”

- **Explanation:** Here, the poet compares his old age to autumn, a season when leaves fall and trees become bare. He also compares himself to twilight and a dying fire. These metaphors show that he is nearing death.

Apostrophe

- **Definition:** An Apostrophe is a figure of speech in which a speaker directly addresses someone (or something) that is not present or cannot respond in reality.
- **Example:** *“That time of year thou mayst in me behold”*
- **Explanation:** In this sonnet, the poet directly addresses an unknown person (probably his beloved). Even though we never hear the beloved speak, the whole poem is a message to this person.

Alliteration

- **Definition:** Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of nearby words.
- **Example:** *“Death’s second self.”* (the “s” sound)
- **Explanation:** These repeated sounds make the lines musical and memorable.

Assonance

- **Definition:** Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in nearby words.
- **Example:** *"In me thou see'st the twilight of such day."*
- **Explanation:** The long "ee" sound in *me*, *see'st*, and *twilight* creates a flowing, musical effect.

Personification

- **Definition:** Personification is a figure of speech that gives human qualities to non-human things.
- **Example:** *"Death's second self, that seals up all in rest."*
- **Explanation:** Here, "night" is personified as a figure that "seals" everything in rest. Night is imagined as a person who brings sleep and rest, just like death.

Symbols

- **Autumn:** Autumn is a symbol of old age. Just as trees lose their leaves in the autumn, life also loses its strength before death. The bare branches shaking in the cold show weakness and emptiness. The "ruined choirs" with no birds singing mean that joy and energy have already passed.
- **Twilight:** Twilight, the time after sunset, is a symbol of life moving toward death. Daylight stands for life, and night stands for death. When the poet says his life is like twilight, he means that most of his time has already gone. Darkness is coming soon, just like death.
- **Dying Fire:** The dying fire is a symbol of the last stage of life. Fire once gave warmth and energy, but now it burns weakly on its own ashes. This shows that old age consumes the strength of youth until death comes.