

# The Shield of Achilles Literary Device

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## Figures of Speech

**Allusion:** The whole poem is an allusion to Greek mythology, especially to Homer's Iliad. Auden rewrites the scene where Thetis, mother of Achilles. It looks at the shield made by Hephaestus. Instead of the beautiful ancient world, she sees images of modern war and cruelty.

**Imagery:** The poem is rich in visual images like "vines and olive trees," "a plain without a feature," and "an artificial wilderness." These pictures help us imagine both what Thetis hopes for and what she actually sees, the contrast between peace and violence.

**Contrast (Juxtaposition):** Auden strongly contrasts classical beauty and modern horror. Thetis imagines joy, song, and order; Hephaestus creates emptiness, fear, and death. This contrast reveals how modern civilization has lost its humanity.

**Irony:** There is deep irony in the shield's design. The goddess expects glory and harmony, but finds symbols of despair. The shield meant to protect Achilles actually mirrors the cruel world he will die fighting for.

## Symbolism:

- The shield symbolizes the world itself, once noble, now corrupted by war and technology.
- The plain represents human emptiness.
- The crowd of faceless people shows a loss of individuality.

## Personification:

Abstract ideas like Justice, Violence, and War seem alive through the poet's description. The world behaves as if it chooses cruelty. This makes the moral decay feel real.

**Metaphor:** Auden uses the shield as a metaphor for modern society. It reflects humanity's outer progress and inner loss.

**Moral Lesson:** The poem teaches us that modern civilization has lost compassion and humanity.

People create power and war instead of peace and love.

LxNotes