

Thyrsis Key Info

Writer: Alfred Lord Tennyson | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Key Facts

- **Author:** Matthew Arnold (1822–1888)
- **Title of the Author:**
 - Pessimistic poet of the Victorian Age.
 - The Melancholy Voice of the Victorian Age
 - Professor of Poetry at Oxford
- **Full Title:** Thyrsis: A Monody, to commemorate the author's friend Arthur Hugh Clough
- **Total Lines:** 240
- **Stanza:** 24 stanzas of irregular lengths
- **Genre:** Pastoral Elegy
- **Published Date:** 1865. It was included in his collection "New Poems" in 1867.
- **Written Date:** 1865 (in memory of Clough, who died in 1861)
- **Form:** Elegy / Monody (modeled after classical pastoral elegy)
- **Meter:** Mostly in iambic pentameter, with irregular rhyme schemes
- **Tone:** Mournful, Reflective, Philosophical
- **Point of View:** First-person point of view (Matthew Arnold as the speaker)
- **Setting:**
 - **Time Setting:** A reflective moment after the death of his friend
 - **Place Setting:** Countryside around Oxford, especially the hill known as Boars Hill

Key Notes

- **Thyrsis:** Thyrsis is actually a fictional character. Thyrsis is a historical elegy, written by Matthew Arnold in memory of his dear friend and poet Arthur Hugh Clough. Through this poem, Arnold recalls his friend's memory and the natural beauty of Oxford.

- **Scholar-Gipsy:** The Scholar-Gipsy is a legendary student who left behind his family life and societal rules to live as a wandering gypsy. This character comes from another poem by Arnold titled "The Scholar-Gipsy", and in "Thyrsis", it is reintroduced as a symbol of his friend's life and thoughts.
- **Oxford Countryside:** In Thyrsis, the natural scenery of Oxford is repeatedly mentioned—such as trees, meadows, hillsides, and trees swaying in the wind. These portray Arnold's memories of his student life and the time spent with his friend, expressing deep nostalgia.
- **Elegy:** Thyrsis is an elegy written to mourn the loss, remember the past, and honor the days gone by. In this poem, Arnold remembers his friend and feels the presence of his soul through nature.
- **Pastoral Elements:** The depiction of rural nature is very important in this poem. The poem follows the tradition of the Greek "pastoral elegy," where the poet expresses his grief amidst natural surroundings.

Here, the word Thyrsis is actually taken from a character in a poem by the ancient Roman poet Virgil. In Virgil's poem, Thyrsis is a shepherd. He is the one who lost the singing contest to Corydon. But it would not be right to say that Clough (who has been compared to Thyrsis) was a defeated poet, because many believe that he was one of the great poets of the nineteenth century.

Matthew Arnold wrote the poem "Thyrsis" in 1865 to mourn the death of his close friend and fellow poet Arthur Hugh Clough. Clough was Arnold's intimate friend and a fellow student at Oxford. The poem is an elegy in which Arnold expresses deep emotion about his friend's memory, their student days, and the natural beauty of Oxford. Along with mourning his friend's death, Arnold also reflects on the passage of time and the fleeting nature of human life. The poem follows the tradition of the Greek "pastoral elegy," where personal grief is expressed through images of nature.