

Tithonus Key Facts

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

Key Facts:

Writer: Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809–1892)

Title of the Author:

- Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom (1850–1892)
- One of the most prominent Victorian poets
- Representative poet of the Victorian Age

Original Title:

Tithonus

Written Time: Around 1833

Published Date: First published in 1859 (in Poems), revised version of an earlier 1833 poem titled Tithon.

Total Lines: 76

Stanza: Unstanzaic (written in continuous blank verse without clear stanza divisions)

Genre: Dramatic monologue

Tone: Melancholic, Regretful, Philosophical

Point of View or Position: First-person narrative (Tithonus speaks the entire poem)

Technical Excellence of the Poem:

- Use of blank verse with rhythmic elegance
- Rich mythological allusions
- Deep philosophical reflection on mortality and immortality
- Skillful contrast between mortal decay and eternal youth

Setting:

Time Setting: Mythological past, long after Tithonus was granted immortality.

Place Setting: The silent, eternal East, the mythic realm of Eos (Aurora), far from the world of mortals.

Source of the Idea of the Poem: Tennyson draws inspiration from Greek mythology. Especially, he is inspired by the story of Tithonus, a mortal loved by Eos (Aurora), the goddess of dawn. Eos asked Zeus to grant him immortality, but forgot to ask for eternal youth. Tithonus lived forever but continued to age. It becomes a sad symbol of the curse of eternal life without eternal youth.

Form and Meter: 76 lines of blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter). "Tithonus" is written in blank verse—that is, unrhymed lines of iambic pentameter. Each line is built from five iambs/feet with a da-DUM rhythm, like this: The woods | decay, | the woods | decay | and fall,

Key Notes: In the poem Tithonus, the main idea is ***“the curse of immortality.”*** Tithonus is a human prince. The goddess Eos (Aurora), the goddess of dawn, falls in love with him. She asks Zeus, the king of the gods, to make Tithonus immortal. But she forgets to ask for eternal youth. So Tithonus lives forever but keeps growing older.

The mood of the poem is slow, silent, and sorrowful. The "East" in the poem means the divine realm of Eos — where dawn begins. It may be divine, but for Tithonus, it feels like a prison. He wants to rest like mortal men.

The big message of the poem is that birth, aging, and death are natural. Humans should follow this order. No one should try to go beyond it. Even a beautiful life becomes painful if it has no end. Tithonus finally realizes this truth and begs the goddess to let him return to the earth and die peacefully.

Background: Alfred Lord Tennyson had a strong interest in Greek myths and deep thoughts about life. He often thought about death, human limits, and immortality. He believed the key difference between gods and humans is death. This idea inspired him to write Tithonus. He first wrote a short version in 1833, called ***Tithon***. Later, he fully rewrote it and published it in 1859 in his Poems collection. By that time, he was already a mature and well-known poet.

The background story of Tithonus comes from Greek mythology. It is based on the love story between Tithonus, a prince of Troy, and Eos (Aurora), the goddess of dawn. Eos fell in love with him and asked Zeus, the king of the gods, to make him immortal. But she forgot to ask for eternal youth. So, Tithonus became immortal but kept growing old. The story shows a deep message about the natural limits of human life.

In this poem, Tennyson raises a powerful question; “Should a man live forever?” Though the story is mythical, it touches a real truth of life: without death, life becomes a burden. This theme appears in many of Tennyson’s other poems too, such as *Ulysses*, *In Memoriam*, and *The Lotos-Eaters*.

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