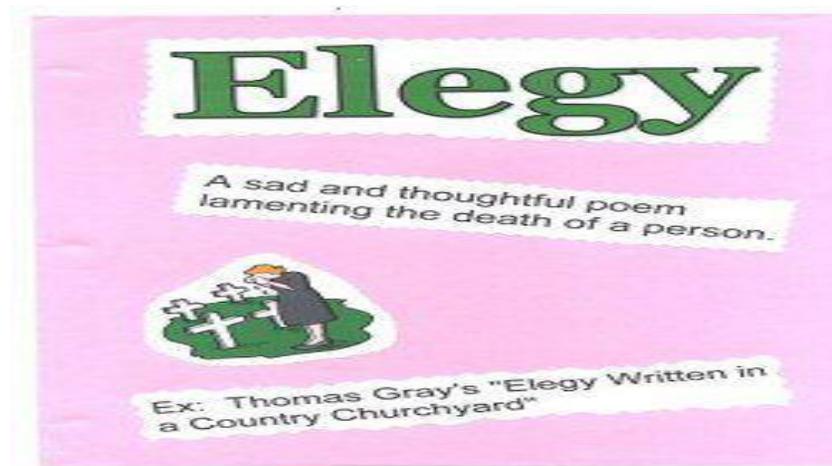
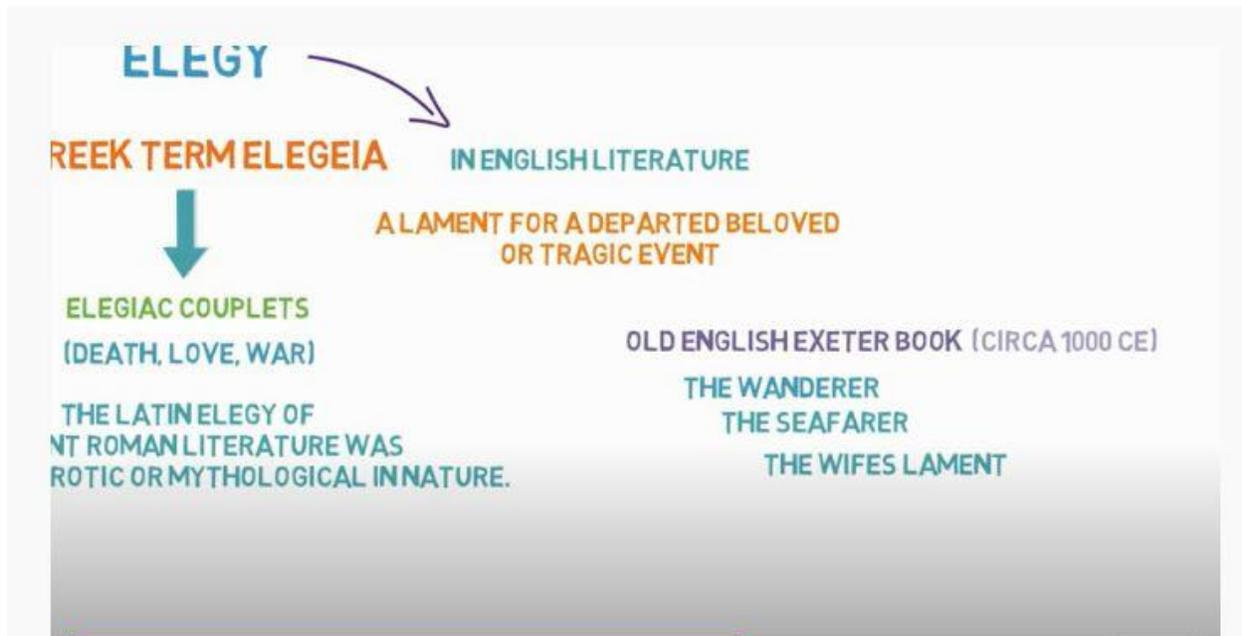


ELEGY

- It is a poem of mourning. Most elegies are about someone that has died. Some mourn a way of life that is gone forever.
- O Captain! My Captain by Walt Whitman is a great example of elegy. It uses metaphor to compare Lincoln's life.



Mourning/ Lament



An elegy is a poem of serious reflection, especially one mourning the loss of someone who died. Elegies are defined by their subject matter, and don't have to follow any specific form in terms of meter, rhyme, or structure. Because elegies focus on the emotional experience of the poet, they are generally written in the first person. An elegy is an expression of grief. It is a song of mourning. It was originally the form of poetry on the subject of sadness, especially 'complaints about love'. But now the word normally refers to the poems written on the subject of death of someone or great loss of any kind.

Elegies are of **two kinds: Personal Elegy and Impersonal Elegy**. In a personal elegy the poet laments the death of some close friend or relative, and in impersonal elegy in which the poet grieves over human destiny or over some aspect of contemporary life and literature. In this way we get his philosophy of life and death. **“Rugby Chapel”** by **Matthew Arnold** for example, is a personal elegy in which the poet mourns the death of his father. It shows Arnold’s elegiac genius at its best.

Elegy refers to reflective poems that lament the loss or death of someone or something. In Greek and Roman times Elegy referred to any poem composed in elegiac meter. Elegiac meter is constructed in alternating dactylic hexameter and pentameter lines. During Elizabethan times Elegy referred to love poems. Thomas Gray’s **“Elegy in a Country Churchyard”** is a famous English elegy where Gray expresses the sorrowful feelings which arise in his mind on seeing the grave of the poor country people buried near the church.

Typically, elegies end on a somewhat hopeful note, with the poet reconciling him- or herself to the death, and ultimately discovering some form of consolation. The poetic form known as the "elegiac stanza," which has a specific meter and rhyme scheme, is different from an elegy.

The History of Elegy : For most of history, the term "elegy" did not have any special relationship to the subject of grief or mortality. In ancient **Greek and Latin** verse, the elegy was a poetic form that was defined by a particular metrical pattern called "elegiac couplets. Some of the most famous elegies in ancient Greek and Latin verse were written by **Catullus and Ovid**.

Elegy in English Literature: In English literature, elegy is not defined by its use of elegiac meter as described above. Until the 16th century, the definition of elegy in English literature remained somewhat indeterminate, and often was taken simply to mean a poem of serious

reflection. During the 16th century, though, the elegy came to be more specifically defined as a poem of grief and lamentation.

In the 18th century, the elegy flourished, particularly among English Romantic poets, who valued the form for its personal and emotional qualities. Thomas Gray's famous 18th century poem, "**Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard**," is an example of this type of elegy—a form that, despite being defined by its elegiac stanzas, does not have its own name.

Pastoral Elegy:

The pastoral elegy is a special kind of elegy. The words '**pastoral**' comes from the Greek word "**pastor**", which means "**to graze**". Hence pastoral elegy is an elegy in which the poet represents himself as a **shepherd mourning the death of a fellow shepherd**. The form arose among the **ancient Greeks**, and **Theocritus** were its most noted practitioners. In ancient Rome, it was used by the **Latin poet Virgil**. In England, countless pastoral elegies have been written down from the Renaissance (16th century) to the present day. Though the elegy is not a strictly-defined form, there is one particular kind of elegy whose definition is clearer: the pastoral elegy, which is typically about a deceased shepherd.

The pastoral elegy can be seen as an elegy written within the tradition of pastoral poetry, whose roots can be traced back to ancient Greek and Roman poetry about the rustic lives of rural-dwelling poets. Pastoral poetry has been written throughout history, from ancient times through today, and the pastoral elegy is just one type of pastoral poetry. Here are some of the features that define pastoral elegy:

The deceased subject of the poem is often a shepherd, echoing a tradition begun by the Roman poet Virgil, who was known for portraying himself and others as shepherds in his poems. It is common, even in pastoral elegies written in English, to include classical mythological figures in the poem (such as the Muses), another homage to the ancient roots of the form. These poems typically begin with an expression of the poet's grief, move on to contemplate death and mortality, and end with the poet coming to peace with death by acknowledging it as integral to the immaculate beauty of nature.

John Milton's 17th century poem "**Lycidas**," of which an excerpt appears below, is generally regarded as the greatest example of pastoral elegy in English literature. This passage, which comes from the end of the poem, embodies the elegiac tradition of turning to consolation after lamentation; Milton implies that the drowned Lycidas (who represents a friend of Milton's who was shipwrecked) will find new life in Heaven.

Examples of Pastoral Elegies in English Literature: Spenser's **Astrophel**, Milton's **Lycidas**, Shelley's **Adonais** and Arnold's **Thyrsis and Scholar Gypsy**, are the most notable examples of pastoral elegy.

The pastoral elegy

- Lincoln was the “shepherd” of the American people during wartime
- His loss has left the flock without a leader
- Nature mourns Lincoln’s death
- The problems of modern times are mentioned
- Natural order contrasted with human order
- Those who die may be the lucky ones, since they are beyond suffering

THE PASTORAL ELEGY:



- The major elegies belong to a sub – species known as Pastoral elegy , the origin of which are traceable to the pastoral laments of Theocritus of Sicily and his successors Moschus and Bion. It was Theocritus who set an example for Milton’s Lycidas, Shelley’s Adonais and Arnold’s Thyrsis.

- **Features:**

1. The scene is pastoral.
2. The poem begins with an invocation.
3. Diverse mythological characters are referred to.
4. Nature is involved in mourning – Nature feels the wound.
5. There is a procession of mourners.
6. There is a flower passage.
7. The elegy ends on a note of hope and joy.