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THOMAS GRAY'S ELEGY  
WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY  
CHURCHYARD

- Thomas Gray who belongs to the New Classical Age was born on 26 December 1716 in London and died on 30th July 1771 in Cambridge.
- He was the dominant poetic figure in the mid 18th century and a precursor of the Romantic Movement
- He is widely known for his "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard".
- He was offered the doctorate laureate in 1757 but he declined.
- Even of the transient poets who are paving the path of Romantic Poetry.
- Gray was a self-critical writer who published only 13 poems in his lifetime.

## Gray's Notable Works are:

1. "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard "(1751)
2. 'On a Distant Prospect of Iton College'.
3. "The Progress of Posey
4. "The Bard"
5. "Sonnet on the Death of Richard West"
6. "Ode on the Spring"
7. "Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes"

## About the Poem:

1. Gray wrote the poem in the graveyard St. Giles Parish Church in Stoke Newington, London in 1742
2. After he completed, he published this poem in 1751.
3. It is translated into Latin and Greek
4. It is a great elegy in the history of English literature

Some of the phrases coined frequently in others' works are -

"The Paths of Glory"

"Celestial Fire"

1. "Far from the Madding Crowd"
2. " Full many a flower is born to blush unseen"
3. . Took inspiration from the grave site of his aunt Mary Antrobus.
4. Elegy contemplates themes like death and after life
5. the term is borrowed from Greek word 'elegos' meaning the song of mourning
6. The verse of the poem is quatrans.
7. The poem was originally titled as "Stanza Wrote in a Country Churchyard"

- It is a meditative poem written in iambic pentameter quatrains
- It is a meditation on human potential, the conditions of country life and morality
- It is one of the best elegies in English language
- The epitaph in the poem is dedicated to Gray himself
- It is a diadectic poem

## Literary Devices Used :

- Alliteration

Used to emphasize certain words and create a musical effect.

- Symbolism

Nature, the setting sun, and the curfew Bell symbolizes the transcendence of human life.

- Imagery

Vivid description of the serene countryside and the simplicity of rural life.

- Metaphor

The poem employs various metaphors to invoke reflection on human mortality and legacy.

## Themes:

- Death (the inevitability of death)
- The transience of life and moments mort
- Death is over reaching regardless of wealth, power of status  
mourning ,loss and reflection
- Used Gothic imagery such as setting of a graveyard
- Universality of death, social class and human values
- Nature is a cyclical reflection of life  
. mortality

## Irony:

- The irony in the poem is he places in the poem using 'thee'
- Gray ironically becomes kindred spirit
- The poem becomes an elegy for the poet and preserves him from being forgotten.
- The epitaph reads.

"A humble man lies beneath the ground, which may have become well educated, and famous but only hopes to be remembered for the simple life he led"

## Romantic elements included in the poem

- Personal and subjective poetry
- Melancholic note
- Love for nature, common man
- Universal appeal
- Supernaturalism and superstition
- Emotional elements
- Nostalgic note

- His style is often considered to bridge the gap between the new classical and romantic era. This is because while Gray utilized traditional poetic form and structures, the content of the poem shifted away from the expectations of Neoclassical literature
- Thomas Gray's work was heavily influenced by his own private thoughts acting as an exploration of the self

- The exploration of the self is a common feature of the Romantic Era.
- Gray 's work can be grouped in with the 'graveyard poets' who wrote during the late 18th century. The graveyard poets used Gothic imagery in their work and commonly discussed the themes of mortality and finally of death

## Analysis:

The poem "Elegy Written in a Country churchyard" consists of 33 stanzas. Each stanza has four lines. As an elegy the poem mourns the death of ordinary men. In the poem Gray talks about the death of the lives of the middle class people, the poet follows all the conventions of the elegiac tradition. There is a pastoral setting there are no pastoral characters. The poem ends in the poets on epitaph.