

Example of richard cory and american literary modernism literature review

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Edwin Arlington Robinson's "Richard Corey"

Robinson's poem, "Richard Corey," fits into the genre of American Literary Modernism because it deals with disillusionment and individuals "trapped by blind laws of heredity and environment or buffeted with uncomprehended chance" (Perkins 130). The poem is written from the point of view of a poor person who goes "without the meat and cursed the bread" who is admiring and envying a rich man of the town named Richard Cory (Robinson 14). Like many Modernist pieces, it reflects back to an earlier era of literature for contrast, using Romantic language to describe Richard Cory. For example, the speaker says, "he glittered when he walked./ And he was rich, yes richer than a king," describing him as royalty, although America had no real monarchs (Robinson 8-9). However, the final lines of the poem, "And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,/ Went home and put a bullet in his head" show the disillusionment of society in all classes and the predicament of people trapped in their lives by hereditary poverty or wealth (Robinson 15-16). This gritty, ironic ending following the Romantic descriptions of Cory are what make this a Modernist piece.

This piece still feels relevant to today. The news and tabloids constantly show rich, beautiful celebrities making terrible mistakes, dying young, and encountering tragedy apparently of their own making. The average citizen wonders how a person who "has it all" can possibly come to such a dire end. Part of what is enjoyable about the poem and also frustrating at the same time is the mystery of why Richard Cory committed suicide, because it leaves open the questions of what hope is there for the common man if successful men like Cory feel such despair? It is especially frustrating

because readers today are used to exhaustive reports on why and how things like this occur in the mass media, but this poem leaves any reasons unanswered.

Paul Simon's "Richard Cory"

Simon's song, "Richard Cory," takes the obvious themes of Robinson's poem, and enhances the description further emphasizing the gap between the wealthy lifestyle of Cory and the poverty of the singer of the song. Like Modernist literature, it emphasizes themes of "heredity and environment," describing Cory as a man born into wealth as "a banker's only child" (Perkins 130, Simon 3). Simon's song does not use the Romantic language that Robinson's poem does. Instead, it uses naturalistic descriptions of Cory's lifestyle which still fit into Modernist literature; for example, the lyrics "And the rumor of his party and the orgies on his yacht!/ Oh, he surely must be happy with everything he's got" are much grittier and frank than the words of Robinson's poem (Simon 15-16).

This song was interesting because it creates a greater connection between Cory and the singer, who says, "But I work in his factory/ And I curse the life I'm living/ And I curse my poverty" (6-8). This increases the irony at the end of the piece when the singer realizes Cory committed suicide. Throughout the piece, the singer keeps stating, "Oh, I wish that I could be/ Richard Cory," which is a superb description of how the common worker tends to feel about life even today: he has the idea that if only he had a little more wealth, a little more fame, life would be better (Simon 11-12). The song is enjoyable to listen to because its energetic beat shows the idea that the singer is not

going to give up his wish to be a man like Richard Cory in spite of the idea that power, wealth, and fame are not guarantees to happiness.

Works Cited

Perkins. "Literary Renaissance." *American Literature Since the Civil War*, 2011. 127-156. McGraw-Hill/Create.

Robinson, Edwin Arlington. "Richard Cory." *American Literature Since the Civil War*, 2011. 137. McGraw-Hill/Create.

Simon, Paul. "Richard Cory." Paul Simon Official Website. Web.