

# Poetry exploitation: "to an athlete dying young" by a.e. housman

[Profession](#), [Poet](#)



"To An Athlete Dying Young" by A. E. Housman is a powerful poem that communicates that an athlete has died a winner and the author displays death in a positive light. The writer A. E. Housman shows a fondness for this athlete. This man doesn't die a bad death according to the author but he dies a legend by winning a race for his town. The author is trying to show the reader how the athlete dying young may be a good thing because fame and glory begins to fade when you are alive but once a person dies they are much more appreciated and the man dies after taking a big win which results in the town viewing him as a legend.

In this poem diction and imagery are used to display the man's achievement before his death. The words "chaired", "shoulder-high", "glory", "cheers", "challenge-cup", and "garland" communicate how this man accomplished the goal of winning the race for his town. He died achieving something great; he died with honor and with a whole town celebrating him. Diction such as "away", "does not stay", "shut", "strengthless dead" all emphasize the athlete's death. The writer states, "Smart lad, to slip betimes way" which expresses that this death wasn't seen as a tragedy but an accomplishment. The imagery displays both victory and death. The man being carried by a crowd home shows heroic imagery. Stanza two makes a huge shift because the crowd is no longer celebrating but instead the athlete is being carried to the graveyard by mourning family and friends which also displays an image to the reader. The imagery in this poem does not depend on figurative language in the beginning of the poem but as the poem goes on it does depend on figurative language.

Figurative language is displayed in this poem by the literary devices personification and apostrophe. In line 20, Personification is used when the author states, " And the name died before the man" implying a name could die and in line 13 the author states, " Eyes the shady night has shut" implying that a shady night can shut eyes. In line 16, the author states, " After earth has stopped the ear" implying the earth can stop an ear. Apostrophe is used because the author is speaking about someone who is absent, the athlete is dead. The author uses syntax of going back and forth between speaking about victory and death. The poem consists of complete sentences because we can see each idea is finished before the next line begins. Verbs are more prevalent in this poem. The poem uses caesura to make pauses between lines.

The tone of the poem, " To An Athlete Dying Young" is reminiscent, melancholy, and peaceful. The author has found peace in the athlete's death due to the fact that it has had a positive impact on the athlete's title. The tone shifts from celebratory to sad, from victory to death. The reader feels celebratory for this athlete but it becomes mournful when the athlete dies immediately after his victory but the author brings light to the athlete's death emphasizing that death has created a legend, life wouldn't have. The idea of the poem is bitter-sweet.

The poem " To An Athlete Dying Young" has a very powerful theme that your greatest accomplishments and your greatness can live on after death. The dead athlete is praised for dying young because now he will be remembered in glory and not forgotten. When you die old most of the time your greatness

begins to fade but when you die at your greatest peak you become a legend. The author finds positivity in death which most of us would find awful. Memories are truly important because that's how we all leave a mark on this earth when we die. Sometimes the worst things in life are working for our best.