

Miniver cheevy: couch potato

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Miniver Cheevy: Couch Potato? A poet can select from a variety of poetic elements in order to express a particular message. The most powerful messages contain a universal perspective which endures the transitions between generations. One such poem is "Miniver Cheevy" by Edwin Arlington Robinson. Robinson's use of imagery, rhythm, and emotional appeal illustrate and expose a timeless characteristic of human nature. Good imagery not only produces a strong image in the readers' minds but also stimulates associations. Robinson's imagery produces a strong impression about Miniver Cheevy's character, especially Cheevy's frustrations with life. In the first stanza, Robinson presents the image of an unsatisfied person who "grew lean while he assailed the seasons." The phrase "grew lean" creates an image of someone losing too much weight. To complain or fight against the seasons (weather) reinforces this image of unrest or frustration, for the weather has rarely been tamed for long. Thus, in this opening stanza the reader gets an initial image of Cheevy as a frustrated loser who may lack common sense. Robinson's use of rhyme and sound provides an appropriate accompaniment to the images he produces. The stanzas have a consistent rhythm and rhyme pattern. This consistency of rhyming every other line in each stanza produces a subtle sense of pattern to Cheevy's life. Consequently, the readers expect Cheevy to be consistent in his behavior. In the next to last stanza, Robinson repeats the word "thought" four times (27-28). This has the double power of the repetition of the sound of the word as well as the significance of the meaning. Cheevy's final retreat from reality is repeated escapes into his own thoughts. Ultimately, the readers can feel nothing but disappointment at the end of the poem, for Cheevy makes no

substantial effort to overcome his frustrations. However, this is not unexpected. The readers may hope to see Cheevy resolve his frustrations, but as they follow Cheevy and his thought processes, he has been very consistent in his selection of unrealistic ideals to strive for and hope for. Throughout the poem, Cheevy has viewed himself as a person born in the wrong time. He never takes meaningful action in response to his real situation. Thus, in the end, Cheevy retreats further into his unrealistic thinking and fortifies it with his drinking. The readers should not be disappointed at Cheevy's lack of initiative, for he has avoided reality all throughout the poem with his unrealistic and impractical longing to be a part of the heroic stories of the past during the times of Thebes, Camelot, and Priam. In conclusion, Robinson's message is very powerful in its depiction of a character who retreats from the current situation and justifies his action with the excuse of circumstance. Robinson has combined imagery, rhyme pattern and consistent characterization to give the poem the central core of its power. Although this poem was written nearly 100 years ago, the message has a universal quality to it. Today we can see many of the offspring of Miniver Cheevy sitting around their television sets drinking while they escape into the illusions of distant and past (passed?) lives.