

Analyse of “the darkling thrush”

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Analyse of " The Darkling Thrush" Thomas Hardy presents a theme of hope in his poem The Darkling Thrush. In the poem winter season has brought about death and despair. A tired old man leans over a coppice gate in a desolate area, to see the ghosts of the past and little hope for the future. Hardy uses imagery to evoke ideas and images in the readers mind. " The land's sharp features seemed to me. The Century's corpse outleant, His crypt the cloudy canopy, The wind its death-lament. " In describing the landscape he refers to the landscape as an intimate object as if it were human. He compares the landscape to a dead body laying all around him and the clouds becoming the coffins top, and the wind his death lament. The man also describes the landscape to have as much life and spirit as he does. Hardy choose his words carefully using negative words such as gray, desolate, broken and haunted. This negatively leads us to believe that this is how Harper feelings are; alone and frightened out in the cold. While still using a negative tone Harper tries to turn the poem to a somewhat positive tone. He continues to use wording such as frail, aged, gaunt and small but adds in wording like full-hearted and joy illimited. The change of wording suggests a shift in the tone of the poem. A songbird has entered, spreading warmth and hope into the earlier desolate and dead landscape. The theme of hope is introduced with the appearance of a songbird in stanza three. The bird is meant to resemble hope and that things are not quite over yet even though it may seem so. In the winter months death is brought forth yet in the coming of spring restores that life once again. The poem suggests that if one doesn't give into the negative a positive can and may come forth; whether one is aware of this or not. In the poem's last stanza the man reveals his

thoughts as if his thoughts as if he has seen a glimpse of hope as the life songbird colours the air with its song. " So little cause for carolings Of such ecstatic sound Was written on terrestrial things Afar or nigh around, That I could think there trembled through His happy good-night air Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew, And I was unaware. " The stanza suggests that there may be hope after all. Is it the spring coming once more? Or is it just the ghost messing with him? Hardy's poem as well as its overall theme is a reflection of the time period he lived in. The poem takes place on New Year's Eve, the last day of the 19th century. The queen is barely breathing her last few breaths and the Victorian Era is coming to an end. Waiting just around the corner is a new era, a new king, and a new Period completely different from the Victorian Era. The theme of hope is presented in a fashion that even though something may seem dark and shadowy that one needs to have a little faith in such matters. Things in the world and life are going to be unclear because nothing is ever sure. Hardy wants readers to have reliance in the world and the transformation of the times. Stanzas 1. The gate which the speaker is leaning on represent the threshold of the new century. The spectral quality of frost suggests the ageing and the ghostly quality of the landscape. The scene has the mere trace of life, in which natural and human presences are ghostly. The figure of the " weakening eye" symbolizes the ending of the day along with the ending of the century. The " tangled bine-stems" represent a harp which all the strings have been broken emphasizing the " winter's dregs". The stanza ends with the speaker's awareness that he is alone, the people who usually occupy the land have returned to their home. 2. This stanza also marks the end of a century. The landscape's

features become like an immense body layed out. The first sentence shows the speaker's mind enclosing the huge space of land and sky into the frightening display of the Century's corpse in its coffin. The sky is the lid. The second sentence emphasizes that the ending of the century is not just closing to the speaker, but an end which seems to separate it from any relation to the future. Every spirit of vegetal and human life is under the pall of this death. 3. The darkling thrush, in all its homeliness and diminutiveness, is the corporeal voice of the real world. The bird's song is spontaneous and unpremeditated. It " fling[s]" its " soul" into the " gloom" in contrary of the speaker's previous flinging of his spiritless soul upon the landscape. The bird's joyful act appears to the speaker as a choice, and not for mere survival in the " growing gloom", but for the enthusiastic and full-hearted participation. 4. The speaker has not been convinced or transported out of the " growing gloom", but his response to the birds song is to think. Although the " blessed Hope" is a knowledge only the bird has and of which the speaker is yet unaware, the speaker accepts the birds song as a sign that there is hope for the future. Analysis of " The Darkling Thrush", by Thomas Hardy As the title has already mentioned, this assignment will be an analysis on a poem by Thomas Hardy. The poem is called " The Darkling Thrush", also known by another title, " By the Century's deathbed". My analysis will include elements such as the poems' setting, structure, imagery, diction, rhyme scheme and theme. I will go into one element at the time, and them give examples from one stanza only in that element. I will not come back to the same elements in the other stanzas, even though they are there. Therefore, this will not be a complete analysis of every element in

each of the stanzas. I'd rather prefer to give a thorough description of what the different elements are and then give a few examples of each of them. In the end I will try to come up with a conclusion. The poem takes place on New Years Eve, the last day of the 19th century. It's also the end of the Victorian Age. Winter is bringing death and desolation with it. A tired old man leans over a coppice gate in a desolate area, seeing ghosts of the past and little hope in the future. This poem has 4 stanzas, each with 8 lines. This is what we call an octave. The lines change between having 4 and 3 stressed syllables in them, which is called tetrameter (4) and trimeter (3). Since the lines also follow a form of having one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable etc, we also call it iambic. As an example I use the poem's 1st stanza. Line number 1, 3, 5 and 7 each have 4 stressed syllables, therefore called iambic tetrameter (/ - / - / - / -). Line number 2, 4, 6, and 8 each have 3 stressed syllables, therefore called iambic trimeter (/ - / - / -).

The tangled bine-stems scored the sky 5
 And all mankind that haunted night 7
 Had sought their household fires. 8

Through the use of personification, symbols, metaphors, alliteration (this last element may also refer to the poem's structure) and a selected sort of words, he produces images in the reader's mind, when all he really does is just speak from his inner state of mind, as modernists are soon to do. To show the use of imagery in this poem, I've taken its 2nd stanza as an example. Here he uses personification on the landscape, thereby referring to an inanimate object as if it were human. He compares the landscape to a dead body lying all around him, and the clouds becoming the coffin's top, and the wind his death lament. The poet also makes use of alliteration in this poem. An example from this stanza is

corpse, crypt, cloudy, canopy etc, where you easily notice the same sounds repeated several times. This has mostly a decorative effect, but it also makes you focus on these words, thereby revealing parts of the poem's nature and temperament. The land's sharp features seemed to be 1 The Century's corpse outleant, 2 The ancient pulse of germ and birth 5 The choice of words in this poem has been carefully selected, leaving little to coincidence. If you look carefully, you notice him using lots of negatively loaded words such as grey, desolate, broken, haunted etc. He himself is all alone out in the cold with all his negatively loaded words. But this changes further on in the poem. In stanza number 3 you will notice a change in the poet's use of diction. Instead of keeping mainly to negatively loaded words, he suddenly makes use of positively loaded words too. Words like frail, aged, gaunt and small still remains, but you also get words like evensong, full-hearted and joy illimited. This change in diction shows the reader that something new has occurred in the poem. A song-bird has entered, spreading warmth and hope into an earlier desolate and dead landscape. Another thing to bear in mind (in a more of a general matter concerning his poems) as you read Hardy's poems, is that he chooses to avoid following a "jewelled line". He doesn't care for writing just pretty poetry. He breaks with conventions concerning the normal use of language. An aged thrush frail, gaunt and small 5 Had chosen thus to fling his soul 7 As you read it through, you easily find its rhyme scheme to be regular. There is only one irregularity in it, and this always means that it's put there on purpose, and that it has a special meaning. He operates with end-rhyme, but both in masculine and feminine endings. The major theme is introduced in the poem's 3rd stanza, in

the appearance of a song-bird. It is probably supposed to resemble "hope", and that things are not quite over yet although it may seem so. Like winter always brings death along with it, the coming of autumn restores some of it to life once more. Although things may look pretty negative right now, don't give in to it, life will return sometime, even though you are not aware of it yourself. This theme can be seen as a kind of reflection on the time Thomas Hardy lived. It was the end of an era, and end of a Period and almost the end of a Queen. And when a new Period is called for, it's often a reaction to the old one. Now was the time for a reaction. Things looked dark and not so promising. People didn't know what hope there lay in the future, but as this poem says, there may be hope coming although you don't know of its coming. In the poems last stanza, the man revealing his thoughts to us sees a glimpse of hope, as the song-bird colours the air with its singing. There may be hope after all. Is it the spring coming once more? Or are his "Demi-Gods" just playing with him? So little cause for carolings

1 Was written on
terrestrial things 3 That I could think there trembled through 5 Some blessed
Hope whereof he knew 7 If you've followed me through these 5 pages, you
will probably not only feel that your understanding of the poem is enhanced,
but also your understanding of poems in general. I've tried to guide you
through some of the main elements of poetry, giving a brief explanation as
to what they are and how to find them. Because I've chosen to spend so
much time on this, I didn't use them all in each and every stanza. But now
that you have it in front of you, why not try to look for signs of the different
elements in the other stanzas? If I were to give my own opinion of this poem,
then I think I like the other title of the poem better. It is more fitting,

considering the context around the writer at the time. You are in the last day of the 19th century, the queen is breathing her last few breaths, and so is the Victorian era. Awaiting just around the corner is a completely new era, a new king, and an entirely new Period entirely different from the Victorian.