

In memory of wb
yeats in comparison
to other auden poems
essay sample



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In Memory of WB Yeats, discussing how far you find it characteristic of other WH Auden's poems you have studied W. H Auden's "In Memory of W. B Yeats" is an elegy to commemorate the life and death of a great poet, W. B Yeats. However, Auden adds another dimension to the poem by incorporating political references significant during the age of oppression and turmoil of the impending war and the extent of effectiveness of poetry at any point in time. In this poem, he utilizes techniques and themes commonly found in his other poems. Firstly, the theme of death existent in the elegy is represented in two ways, a literal description of the day Yeats had passed and a sense of impending doom strung throughout the elegy. It is drawn from imageries and symbolism such as using a city at war as a metaphor for Yeats' dysfunctional body, "provinces of his body revolted, the squares of his mind were empty".

This can also evoke a parallel image of the disruption of Europe present at that time, which resonates with the fear of people in that era. Another example of a negative reflection of Europe plunging into World War 2 is found in lines 46 to 49, "In the nightmare of the dark, All the dogs of Europe bark, And the living nations wait, Each sequestered in its hate". This impression of looming death is similarly found in his other poems such as "Look Stranger, On This Island Now" which indicates a warning of oncoming troubles when "far off like floating seeds the ship diverge on urgent voluntary errands" and "Now the leaves are falling fast". These two poems therefore foreshadow the outcome of war found in "Refugee Blues" where "a million souls" are struggling seek sanctuary and have nowhere to hide. Furthermore, in the elegiac poem, Auden discusses another theme of

isolation. While he acknowledges the death of an important poet in the passing of Yeats, he brings the reader back into reality by reflecting on how only a few thousands will remember this day as slightly unusual. His passing will not have a grand effect on their everyday lives.

This correlates with the indifference of humans to suffering and a sense of detachment found in *Musee de Beaux Art* where “ a boy falling out of the sky” could not capture the attention of the ship which “ sailed calmly on”. It could be argued that Auden is pointing the finger to society to be more conscious of suffering and death. Moreover, Auden incorporates symbolism into his poems frequently. In “ In memory of WB Yeats” he builds up metaphors about water to explain the fluidity and function of poetry in everyday life. He asserts that poetry adopts its own soul once it is written even after the passing of the poet. Auden imagines poetry as a river flowing through landscapes and towns signifying the importance of art in the midst of turmoil and a “ healing fountain” that can lead people to grow. In contrast, he uses a metaphor of people making their own prisons to parallel the frozenness and helplessness people experience including the likes of Yeats, who is described as an “ Irish vessel”. His heavy use of metaphors in this poem is not unlike the others.

One such example is the use of weather as an indication of the change in mood and atmosphere such as the wintry coldness of the day Yeats passed in which winter is commonly linked to the time of death. When Auden is describing the movement of the clouds in “ Look stranger on this island now” in the last stanza and the falling leaves in “ now the leaves are falling fast” as a hint of decay and dying, it is reminiscent of the technique he employs in <https://assignbuster.com/in-memory-of-wb-yeats-in-comparison-to-other-auden-poems-essay-sample/>

the elegy. Additionally, Auden often uses other literary techniques such as alliterations and personification to provide a clear, vivid visual and auditory imagery for the reader. For example when he states " snow disfigured the public statues, the mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day", it gives nature a human quality that makes the day of Yeats death more bleak and depressing. Furthermore, the harsh tones start to develop in section 3 " dark, bark, wait, and hate" when describing the situation of war. It further enhances the gloom and isolation existing in the poem.

This technique is also found in " As I Walked out one evening" where Auden personifies Time and in " from the first coming down" Auden makes use of alliterations to stress a sense of solitude, worry and apprehension from lines 11 to 14. However the structure of this poem differs from the other poems Auden has written. It is divided into three different sections all with different characteristics, which are free form, unrhymed hexameter and rhymed eight syllable couplets. It has been argued that he is possibly imitating Yeats' style of writing as a tribute to Yeats' mastery of form. Another suggestion is that Auden may have had difficulty summing up Yeats' life in one poem and instead offered 3 different ways to view his passing. In conclusion, the poem " In Memory of WB Yeats" contains many literary techniques and themes such politics, death, isolation, role of the poet and poetry that are reminiscent and recurring in Auden's other selected works. To some extent, it is a distinctive Auden poem with the exception of being separated into three parts as homage to Yeats' form.