

"thanatopsis", "the tide rises, the tide falls", "the first snowfall":fireside po...

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From the 1830's to the 1870's the writings during this time were classified as the Romantic Period. This was a time when writing was based upon imagination, nature, individuality, wisdom from the past, and the common man seen as our hero. In this period authors each spoke of death and life but each had their own perspective.

"Thanatopsis" by William Cullen Bryant, "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and "The First Snowfall" by James Russell Lowell suggest that the reoccurring theme of each poem is that death cannot be avoided so people should make the most of life as it is. The poem "Thanatopsis" explains nature's ability to lighten our humanly thoughts of death and to make death less painful. William Cullen Bryant wants the reader to think a little more on the scary subject of death. Trying to give the reader a better understanding of death Bryant says "Yet a few days, and thee The all-beholding sun shall see no more In all his course" (Bryant 17-18). He is putting the audience in the situation of considering they only have a few days left to face death and accept it without being afraid. Every living thing will eventually become one with nature after it dies.

Showing life always returns to nature William states that "Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim thy growth, to be resolved to the earth again" (Bryant 23). He is telling us this to make us realize that the earth has helped us grow and nourished us so long but will eventually take back what belongs to it. Being ok with dying and accepting death is going to happen is an easier death than struggling to hold on to life. Giving advice for people accepting death Bryant says "Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night, scourged by his dungeon; but, sustain'd and soothed by an unfaltering trust, approach <https://assignbuster.com/thanatopsis-the-tide-rises-the-tide-falls-the-first-snowfallfireside-poets-analysis/>

thy grave" (Bryant 77-79). We must approach death not dreading it or trying to run away from it but be relaxed and soothed and trust it. Reading "Thanatopsis" one would begin to understand and agree upon the fact that humans are all a part of nature and that humans should let nature and her glories comfort us in the thoughts of death.

In "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow the cycle of death and life is shown. The belief of new life replacing death is seen in Longfellow's writing. He gives an example of life taking death's place when he says "The little waves... efface the footprints in the sand" (Longfellow 5). Longfellow explains that as new humans are born upon the earth others will die so that the new may take their place. Life is only a cycle and that is all it will ever be. Longfellow states at the beginning of the poem that "the tide rises, the tide falls" (Longfellow 1).

He focuses on life and death and repeats "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls" four times through his poem to show that life is a never ending cycle. There is a sense that even after death, life continues on its own path. He gives his view of life not waiting around when he says "The morning breaks: the steeds in their stalls Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls: The day returns, but nevermore Returns the traveler to the shore" (Longfellow 10-13). He is portraying that idea that the horses will keep stamping, neighing and doing their thing, the tender of the horses will keep tending to them, the day will return every time but the dead traveler no more and life still moves on without slowing down. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow proves to readers that death and life will always continue on their way. When people lose a loved

one they experience great emotions after death as seen in "The First Snowfall" by James Russell Lowell.

The author demonstrates with his emotions that you cannot forget someone you love after they die. In his mind he is able to accept death by remembering: I remembered the gradual patience That fell from that cloud like snow, Flake by flake, healing and hiding The scar that renewed our woe. (Lowell 29-32) Lowell shows here that the snow was like patience falling from the sky covering the headstone and slowly starting to hide and ease his pain from losing his daughter. It is hard for one to accept something as awful as death. In Lowell's poem the man's daughter asks where does snow come from and explains twice to her as from where it comes from saying: And again to the child I whispered, "The snow that husheth all, Darling, the merciful Father Alone can make it fall! (Lowell 33-36) The man says this to his daughter showing her that our Almighty God above is responsible for healing and allowing the beautiful snow to fall and cover the headstone of her sister.

Having lost a daughter can be hard to overcome but the man in Lowell's poem is able to slowly overcome it with his other daughter there. After the man tells his daughter of the beautiful snow from God he then does something to his daughter to make himself feel better: Then, with eyes that saw not, I kissed her; And she, kissing back, could not know That my kiss was given to her sister, Folded close under deepening snow. (Lowell 37-40) The man closes his eyes and kisses his alive daughter when his kiss is really given to her sister and not meant for this daughter. James Russell Lowell portrays that life for the living after losing someone they love is difficult.

Reading and analyzing "Thanatopsis" by William Cullen Bryant, "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and "The First Snowfall" by James Russell Lowell a reader can automatically pick up on the theme of death being inevitable. These poems all have the theme of death but each express death being accepted in their own ways.

"Thanatopsis" accepts death with becoming one with nature, "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls" accepts death while using the ocean as a metaphor it shows that new life replaces the old, and in "The First Snowfall" death is accepted by letting the "Almighty Father's" snow fall and cover the man's dead daughter's tombstone. Although death not being an option is true no matter how one may state it, there are multiple outlooks seen through each poem of how one should live life while they can.