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**Topic: The Eagle**

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## **'THE EAGLE'**

### **Introduction**

- 'The Eagle' is a poem written by the English poet **Alfred, Lord Tennyson**. Tennyson lived during the Victorian Era, during the 1800s.
- In this era, a movement called Romanticism became extremely popular within the literary society. It was the reaction to the previous Age of Reason among the culture.
- Romanticism focused on freedom instead of formalism, individualism instead of conformity, and imagination instead of reality.

- Romantic poets believed that nature was beautiful, and humans are the center of nature. They believed humans should get in touch with their inner soul by appreciating the beauty of nature. Tennyson's poem, 'The Eagle' clearly shows an emphasis on appreciating nature.

### **Stanza One**

**He clasps the crag with crooked hands;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.**

- The poem has a very simple concept. It focuses on one eagle alone in the wild. In the first line, the eagle is atop a mountain, poised to strike. He is high up where no other animal or human can go. He is alone in his grandeur, with the sun and the bright blue sky forming the perfect background scenery.
- This piece begins with a description of a creature, only labeled with the pronoun "He". The speaker is assuming that a reader will understand who this "He" is, and if one reads the title of the poem it's clear. Tennyson's speaker is describing an eagle, who is at the moment the poem starts up on a "crag," meaning a rugged, exposed cliff face.
- This is somewhere human beings couldn't, or would have trouble, reaching. It is beyond that which humanity can experience, except through the words of writers such as Tennyson. Alfred Lord Tennyson also makes use of alliteration in this first line in order to increase the rhythm of the phrase.

- Additionally, through personification, Tennyson imbues the eagle with human-like features. He refers to its claws as “hands” and the whole eagle as “he” rather than “it”.
- Tennyson expands the landscape further as he describes the ring of blue sky that wraps around “the...world”. The eagle stands, as if lordling, over the lands below him. He represents a clear image of power and knowledge, as well as the traditional meanings associated with eagles: freedom and bravery.

## **Stanza Two**

**The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.**

- The second stanza shows the only action of the eagle. The first- and second-line show that, as he watches from his high perch, the sea moves below him. Then, in the final line, the eagle makes a grand dive towards the sea. The poem ends here, with the reader not quite sure why the eagle dived off his mountain roost.
- In the second stanza the speaker gives the reader a few more details about the eagle’s surroundings. The rocky cliff on which the creature is perched is, as already made clear, very steep. Tennyson adds that it is also jutting out over the sea. The eagle is so high up, the sea appears to be covered in wrinkles. They represent the various

shapes of the waves and might make one consider how age and time play into this description.

- In the next line the eagle's position of power on the rocks is reemphasized. He is high above everything else and is able to "watch" what's going on below and around him. A reader should also take note of how Tennyson called the mountain walls the eagle's walls, as if they belong to him. He has a claim over this piece of land and because he is the only creature capable of reaching it, there is no one to challenge him.
- The transition from the second line to the third is powerful. All of a sudden, the eagle drops from his perch, plunging towards the sea below. This intentional dive was preplanned on the eagle's part, certainly, but for the reader it comes as something of a shock. "He" is hunting a smaller creature below him and knew when the precise moment would be for him to dive for it. In the final line Tennyson describes the eagle as a "thunderbolt". Again, this speaks to his god-like power in this world.

### Analysis

- 'The Eagle' is one of Tennyson's shortest poems. It is composed of only two stanzas, with three lines each. However, it is full of figurative language and deeper meaning. Let's look at the figurative language in each line.

- The first line of the poem is a beautiful example of **alliteration** in the words 'clasps,' 'crag' and 'crooked.' Tennyson uses this technique to make emphasis and create a specific melody.
- In this way, Tennyson is ensuring the reader pauses to consider the eagle, high up on his perch and makes the eagle seem much more important than a simple bird.

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