

PATORAL ELEGY

The pastoral elegy is a poem about both death and idyllic rural life. Often, the pastoral elegy features shepherds. The genre is actually a subgroup of pastoral poetry, as the elegy takes the pastoral elements and relates them to expressing grief at a loss. This form of poetry has several key features, including the invocation of the Muse, expression of the shepherd's, or poet's, grief, praise of the deceased, a tirade against death, a detailing of the effects of this specific death upon nature, and eventually, the poet's simultaneous acceptance of death's inevitability and hope for immortality. Additional features sometimes found within pastoral elegies include a procession of mourners, satirical digressions about different topics stemming from the death, and symbolism through flowers, refrains, and rhetorical questions.[1] The pastoral elegy is typically incredibly moving and in its most classic form, it concerns itself with simple, country figures. In ordinary pastoral poems, the shepherd is the poem's main character. In pastoral elegies, the deceased is often recast as a shepherd, despite what his role may have been in life.

Pastoral elegy, a subcategory of the elegy form of poetry, has its roots in Hellenistic Greek poetry of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE. Pastoral poetry itself, which deals heavily with shepherds and other forms of rustic life, dates back to the 3rd century BC when Theocritus, a Greek poet, wrote his idylls about rustic life in Sicily. The Roman poet Virgil was known for writing poems that depicted his sophisticated colleagues and himself as shepherds in simple, rustic settings. Developed over centuries, pastoral elegies mourn a subject by representing the mourner and the subject as shepherds. Pastoral elegy poetry flourished in Europe between the Renaissance and the 19th century. However, modern poets, such as J.V. Cunningham and Alan Dugan, have re-imagined the elegy in both subject and form, and pastoral elegies have recently shown up in more satirical forms. However, other modern poets, such as William Carlos Williams and W. H. Auden, have written poems that maintain the traditional form and features of the pastoral elegy.

Written by John Milton, "Lycidas" is a pastoral elegy that first appeared in a 1638 collection of elegies in English and Latin entitled *Justa Edouardo King Naufrago*. Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Adonaïs* is a pastoral elegy written by Shelley immediately after hearing about the death of John Keats. The elegy is 495 lines long, consisting of a total of 55 Spenserian stanzas. *Adonaïs* was composed during the spring of 1821 and was eventually published in July 1821. Written by Matthew Arnold in December 1865, *Thyrsis* is a personal elegy that mourns the death of Matthew's friend Arthur Hugh Clough.