

Eulogy

Definition of Eulogy

Known as [homily](#), the term eulogy originates from the Greek word *eulogia*, which means “to praise” somebody or something. A eulogy is a literary device that is a laudatory expression in a speech, or a written tribute to a person recently deceased. We can say, it is a commendation or high praise intended to give honor, generally to a dead family member or loved one, or it is a tribute given to a dead person at his or her funeral.

Eulogies are also paid as tributes to living persons; for instance, one can dedicate it to his retired colleagues, bosses, or employees for winning respectable position and noble deeds. Hence, in general, it is a gesture of honoring somebody.

Difference Between Eulogy, Elegy and Obituary

These three terms are often confused due in their meanings. A *eulogy* and an [elegy](#) are similar because both are written for the dead. An elegy is a song or a poem with a lamenting tone that expresses loss of a family member or a loved one. A eulogy, by [contrast](#), is a speech or written tribute to the deceased, or perhaps to a living person, and it is not necessarily in the form of a poem. However, an obituary is a completely different term than eulogy and elegy, as it is a published [biography](#) intended to recount the life of someone who recently died.

Examples of Eulogy in Literature

Example #1: *On Mr. Wm. Shakespeare, he died in April 1616* (By William Basse)

“Renowned Spenser, lie a thought more nigh
To learned Chaucer, and rare Beaumont lie
A little nearer Spenser to make room
For Shakespeare in your threefold, fourfold tomb.
Betwixt this day and that by fate be slain...
Sleep rare tragedian Shakespeare, sleep alone,
That unto us and others it may be
Honor hereafter to be laid by thee.”

Basse has dedicated this eulogy to William Shakespeare 25 years after his death. He suggests that his grave should have been next to Spenser, Chaucer, and Beaumont in Westminster Abbey.

Example #2: *After Thought* (By William Wordsworth)

“I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide,
As being past away.—Vain sympathies! ...

Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide;
The Form remains, the Function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish;—be it so! ...”
Through love, through hope, and faith’s transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.”

Wordsworth has written this eulogy in honor of his close friend. The [speaker](#) is recalling his deceased friend’s memories in that, though he is physically no more with him, his noble deeds will never die.

Example #3: *O Captain, O Captain* (By Walt Whitman)

“O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather’d every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,

While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart! ...”

In this poem, Whitman pays tribute to American president Abraham Lincoln, whom many Americans recognize as a hero. The speaker calls him a captain, and then calls “*dear father!*” He pays high regards to his captain for making the mission successful, and for the services he has done for his country:

“From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won.”

Example #4: A Farewell (By Alfred Lord Tennyson)

“A thousand suns will stream on thee
A thousand moons will quiver;
But not by thee my steps shall be
Forever and forever.”

Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem *A Farewell* is also a eulogy in which the poet himself says goodbye to nature. He describes this fact beautifully, that death is inevitable and nobody can escape it. He says goodbye to trees, seas, and rivers and to other elements of nature because he will die and will be forgotten, except his good deeds. But nature will remain the same forever.

Function of Eulogy

Eulogies are written or spoken memorials that help recall happy and good memories of dead loved ones. In literary works, eulogies can make the deceased appear more real and good to all those people who have not seen or known them. Many writers and poets have written eulogies in the honor of famous literary figures. Another function of eulogy is to keep the memories of dead ones alive. As we have learned from the above-mentioned examples, the nature of a eulogy is optimistic, it is intended to boost the morale of the depressed family.