

In the poem, “The Death of a Toad,” Richard Wilbur writes about a toad he has run over with a lawnmower. Through the poem’s structure, diction, and imagery, Wilbur attempts to pay a respectful tribute to that toad.

The poem’s structure is specifically designed to model a tribute to the toad. First, the poem’s lines end in commas and periods. By using these, the poet allows for the poem to move the slow and flowing pace. This slow and flowing pace is typical for a eulogy or tribute in that the reader can illustrate his emotion for the dead toad. The structure also indicates a tribute through shifts. The poem has two specific shifts in between each of the stanzas. The first stanza indicates the accident where the toad is wounded “chewed and clipped of a leg.” (2) Then, the poem shifts to the second stanza where the poet is describing the struggle of the toad and his death. “He lies as still as if he would return to stone.”(9-10) Finally, the third stanza implies the toad’s heaven and afterlife. The “lost Amphibia’s emperies” (14) indicates a toad’s heaven to which he will “watch across the castrate lawn” (17) with his “wide and antique eyes.” (16) The toad will live on and watch his garden where he perished. With these shifts, the author acknowledges the accident, struggle, death, and continuation of the toad in an organized, honorable, reflective manor.

The poem’s careful diction further indicates that the speaker responds to his killing with a tribute. The poem tells that the garden verge “sanctuaried” the wounded toad. (3) A sanctuary is defined as a holy or sacred place. By using this word, the poet is implying that the place of refuge for the toad is a sacred place. Here, the poet extends a

respectful air to the location of the toad's suffering and death. In addition, the word "ebullient" (13) is used to convey that the poet is very involved in his tribute. Ebullient, meaning full of feeling was used to describe the toad's heaven. With this word, he is overemphasizing the toad's travel towards heaven.

Lastly, imagery is used in the poet's tribute. The toad chooses to reside among the cineraria leaves in the shade. (4) The leaves that relate to death and the darkness of the shade describe the toad's demise in Wilbur's tribute. Sound imagery is also essential to the tribute. The "deep monotone" (12) is referring to the toad's death. The monotone serves to model the steady sound that a cardiac monitor makes when a person dies.

Through extensive structure, diction, and imagery, Richard Wilbur creates a heart felt tribute in response to killing a toad with a lawnmower.

