

Prompt: Identify the title and page number of your chosen poem. Then quote some lines from your poem that show any significant correlation of sound and meaning. What is the correlation? How is sound meaningful here, or how does sound reinforce meaning? (One paragraph.)

Using Sounds to Reinforce Meaning in "The Darkling Thrush"

In "The Darkling Thrush" (6th edition, page 536), Thomas Hardy employs the natural sounds of his chosen words to reinforce descriptions and meanings in his poem. When detailing the coldness of the winter season and the bleak environment surrounding the speaker, he writes: "And Winter's dregs made desolate / The weakening eye of day" (754). In these lines, alliteration is used for the dental "Da" sound of the letter "d". This brings to mind a scene where clumps of snow are falling from tree branches and thudding against the covered ground, while the speaker's heavy footsteps pack together snow as he makes his way through frigid weather.

At the beginning of the second stanza, when providing details about the surroundings, the following lines are shared: "The land's sharp features seemed to be / The Century's corpse outleant, / His crypt the cloudy canopy, / The wind his death-lament" (754). Again, alliteration is used, this time for the "Kuh" sound from the words "corpse", "crypt", "cloudy" and "canopy". One might associate these sounds with the "sharp" features of the land, where the slicing sound offered by "century" is quickly followed by the four cutting sounds from the aforementioned words. Within the context of ice cold temperatures, these sounds enhance their words by providing chilling bite and an overall greater severity.

Given the dark nature of the poem and its sense of concern for the state of the world in future years, these two uses of sound serve as examples of cacophony: the qualities of these words, when spoken aloud, confirm a sense of dread and foreboding that is already being communicated through Hardy's chosen diction.

Re: Dover Beach pg. 818 by Matthew Arnold

The sounds of the words grating roar, draw back and fling all sound fierce, abrupt and forceful. The correlation to life is that chaos flings forward as we draw back from our faith.

I'm glad that you pointed this out. Last semester in ENGL13B (Survey of English Literature the Romantic Era to the Present) we covered this poem in some detail. Our book provided much more background information and history about the poets whose works we were studying, including Matthew Arnold.

Around the time that this poem was released Charles Darwin had published the Origin of Species and England's Industrial Revolution was in full swing. There was a tremendous amount of change being felt across Imperial England and its fragmenting society. Many people were losing their faith and "Dover Beach" acknowledges this by remembering the good of the world through nature, but at the same time viewing the chaos which can also be manifested in it.

Re:

Quote

Response