

Rain



POEM TEXT

1 Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain
 2 On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me
 3 Remembering again that I shall die
 4 And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks
 5 For washing me cleaner than I have been
 6 Since I was born into this solitude.
 7 Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:
 8 But here I pray that none whom once I loved
 9 Is dying tonight or lying still awake
 10 Solitary, listening to the rain,
 11 Either in pain or thus in sympathy
 12 Helpless among the living and the dead,
 13 Like a cold water among broken reeds,
 14 Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,
 15 Like me who have no love which this wild rain
 16 Has not dissolved except the love of death,
 17 If love it be towards what is perfect and
 18 Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

inside a "bleak hut," thinks about their own eventual death with matter-of-fact acceptance. The relentless rain reminds the speaker that they "shall die" but also that, once they are dead, the rain will "wash" away everything that felt impure or disappointing about their solitary life. The speaker considers the dead "Blessed" (implicitly, it seems, for having escaped the hardships of life) and claims to "love" only death. As the speaker reconciles themselves to death's inevitability, the poem suggests that the end of life can feel like a relief from pain and solitude.

As the rain falls, the speaker immediately begins "Remembering again that I shall die." That "shall" emphasizes the fact that death is something unavoidable. Indeed, the speaker says later that death "Cannot [...] disappoint"—that it will come no matter what.

This association between rain and death seems prompted both by the gloominess of rain and by the way rain confines the speaker to "solitude" (in that the speaker is stuck sheltering inside a "hut"), just as death will someday. The relentless rain might also suggest the relentlessness of death, and of the speaker's *thoughts* of death.

Yet the speaker doesn't portray death as something negative. Instead, they present it as a *relief* from the sorrows of life—even a kind of perfection. With no apparent *irony*, the speaker says that "the dead that the rain rains upon" are "Blessed," and they expect to be "wash[ed] clean" by the rain once they're in the grave themselves. Basically, the speaker views death as purifying, a way of escaping life's loneliness and misery. Despite their feelings of "sympathy" toward other people, they claim to "have no love [...] except the love of death." They say the rain has "dissolved" their other loves, suggesting that the rain has isolated and depressed them to the point where they desire only death.

The poem does end with a qualification, suggesting that because death, unlike human love, is "perfect" and "Cannot [...] disappoint," *love* might not be the right word for their feeling toward it. Still, this statement implies that their feeling is more like acceptance or peace. (It also hints that the speaker may have been too disappointed by human love to retain any attachment to it.)

Overall, the speaker seems to welcome their eventual death as a relief from the "solitude" that they were "born into" and that they feel acutely on this rainy day.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-18



SUMMARY

There's nothing here but stormy midnight rain, falling on my drab hut; and loneliness; and me realizing once more that I will someday die. When I die, I won't be able to hear the rain or thank it for rinsing me cleaner than I've felt since I was born into this lonely life. Dead people under the rain are fortunate—but I'm praying that no one I used to love is dying right now, or lying sleepless and alone as they listen to the rainfall. I hope they're not in pain as they listen, or feeling the same kind of helpless sympathy I do amid the living and the dead—feeling like cold water flowing among stiff, broken, motionless stalks. Or feeling, like me, that the stormy rain has washed away all love besides the love of death—if *love* is the right word for what you feel toward something perfect and (as the storm reminds me) unavoidable.



THEMES



THE INEVITABILITY AND RELIEF OF DEATH

The speaker of "Rain," listening to rainfall while lying



SOLITUDE, SYMPATHY, AND ALIENATION

Written during Edward Thomas's World War I service, "Rain" expresses a mix of sympathy for and alienation from the world's suffering people. Lying in a "bleak hut" during a persistent "midnight rain," the speaker feels profoundly cut off from others. In this lonely state, the speaker thinks of everyone else the rain is falling on—both "the living and the dead." The speaker prays that none of their own (former) loved ones is dying, in pain, or feeling the same "Helpless" kind of "sympathy" they do. Yet they insist that they no longer love anyone; they only love "death." Through these statements, the poem shows how great "solitude" can produce a mix of empathy and alienation. A lonely person can keenly feel their distance from the rest of humanity, and even feel *for* the rest of humanity, while losing all belief in their ability to help or connect with others.

The speaker voices "sympathy" for other suffering people, but carefully distinguishes this sympathy from "love." The speaker "pray[s]" for the well-being of others, hoping that "none whom once I loved / Is dying tonight or lying still awake / Solitary." The speaker also hopes that none of these others are "in pain or thus in sympathy / Helpless among the living and the dead." Indirectly, this indicates that the speaker feels sympathy, but also feels "Helpless" to act on that sympathy. They feel sorry for others but can't help them—and can only hope that others aren't going through the same frustration.

In fact, the speaker claims not to love anyone anymore and suggests that their current solitude is a preparation for the total solitude of death. The phrase "none **whom once I loved**" suggests that love is in the past: inwardly, at least, the speaker has cut ties with everyone they cared about. The speaker insists that they feel "cold" among the "broken" people and things of earth and that they "have no love [...] except the love of death." Meanwhile, part of the appeal of "the love of death" seems to be that death, unlike other human beings, "Cannot [...] disappoint" the speaker.

Overall, then, this lonely speaker's feelings toward other people are conflicted, even **paradoxical**. Their loneliness makes them think of and even "pray" for others, yet reject any closer connection as they look ahead toward death. The poem illustrates the way deep "solitude" can generate such inner conflict, leaving its sufferers alienated, perhaps hurt, yet still capable of "sympathy."

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-2
- Lines 5-6
- Lines 8-18



LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-3

*Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain
On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me
Remembering again that I shall die*

The poem begins by introducing its central **image**—the one already previewed by the title:

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain [...]

Counting the title, "Rain" is repeated four times in the poem's first nine words! The **repetition** helps establish the poem's atmosphere and **setting**. This is a very rainy night, one that makes the speaker feel lonely and somber. As the speaker (whose name, gender, age, etc. are never identified) listens to the rainfall, they think about their own inevitable death:

On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me
Remembering again that I shall die [...]

Because the poem reveals so little about the speaker, it's not entirely clear *why* their thoughts turn so quickly to death. However, the language in these opening lines suggests several possibilities. The darkness of "midnight" might remind them of the darkness of death; the "wild[ness]" of the rain might remind them of the untamed forces of nature, which eventually overcome all human lives; the "bleak[ness]" of their "hut" might remind them of the bleakness of death; their "solitude" might remind them of the loneliness of the grave. Or all of the above!

Thomas is also known to have written this poem while living in a particular kind of "hut": a soldier's quarters in a military training camp. As an enlisted infantryman in World War I, he knew he would soon see combat in one of the bloodiest wars in human history; indeed, he died on the battlefield the following year. So while the poem never explicitly mentions war, the "bleak hut" detail offers a possible context for its somber **tone**. (See the Context section of this guide for more.)

These opening lines also establish the poem's form: **blank verse**, or unrhymed **iambic pentameter** (i.e., unrhymed five-beat lines that generally alternate unstressed and stressed syllables). This is an old and classic poetic form in English—one associated, for example, with Shakespearean drama. In fact, the poem is a bit like a Shakespearean **soliloquy** in some ways: it's a solitary meditation on death, love, fate, and other time-honored themes, written in a dramatic and elevated style.

Meanwhile, its sound effects give it a richly lyrical texture: notice, for example, the short /uh/ **assonance** in "nothing but," the **alliteration** of "but" and "bleak," the **internal rhyme** of "but" and "hut," and the short /eh/ assonance in "Remembering again."

LINES 4-6

*And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks
For washing me cleaner than I have been
Since I was born into this solitude.*

Lines 4-6 describe what will happen after the speaker dies. Rain will still fall, but the speaker will:

[...] neither hear the rain nor give it thanks
For washing me cleaner than I have been
Since I was born into this solitude.

The speaker seems sobered by the thought that, in death, they'll no longer be able to "hear the rain" (or have any other sensory experience). More surprisingly, the speaker also seems to regret that they won't be able to "give [...] thanks" to the rain.

If they *could* thank the rain after death, they would thank it "For washing me cleaner than I have been" since the day they entered the "solitude" of existence. Basically, they imagine rainfall as a [symbolic](#) purification of the dead, as if rainwater on graves could wash away the loneliness and troubles of life. On some level, in fact, the speaker seems to be looking *forward* to death. The [repetition](#) of "solitude" here (after its earlier appearance in line 2) suggests that the speaker's isolation may be depressing them.

Line 6 is the first [end-stopped line](#) in the poem; the previous five lines are all [enjambéd](#). The repeated enjambments make the poem seem to pour or cascade down the page, unhindered by punctuation—thereby mimicking the unstoppable, pouring rain.

LINES 7-10

*Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:
But here I pray that none whom once I loved
Is dying tonight or lying still awake
Solitary, listening to the rain,*

In lines 7-10, the speaker's thoughts shift from the dead to the living. Having hinted in lines 4-6 that they would consider death a relief, the speaker now says plainly that the dead are fortunate:

Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:

Right away, however, the speaker qualifies this statement. They might personally welcome death on some level, but they don't want anyone they've ever cared about to be dying:

But here I pray that none whom once I loved
Is dying tonight or lying still awake
Solitary, listening to the rain,

They don't even want any former loved ones to feel as

"Solitary" as they're feeling. They "pray" that the people they've cared about are happy and/or asleep, rather than "lying still awake" in a state of loneliness, illness, or pain.

Notice how the speaker refers to people "whom once I loved," rather than people they *continue* to love. This small detail becomes important in the final lines of the poem, as the speaker claims to feel "no love" (during "this wild rain," at least) besides "the love of death."

LINES 11-14

*Either in pain or thus in sympathy
Helpless among the living and the dead,
Like a cold water among broken reeds,
Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,*

Lines 11-14 introduce a complex [simile](#), one of two that come in quick succession toward the end of the poem. The speaker "pray[s]" that no one he ever loved is "listening to the rain" and feeling as he feels:

Either in pain or thus in sympathy
Helpless among the living and the dead,
Like a cold water among broken reeds,
Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,

This tangled language boils down to a fairly simple visual image. The speaker imagines a feeling of "sympathy" that touches and encompasses "the living and the dead" in the same way "a cold water" pools "among broken reeds." This sympathy is [figuratively](#) "cold" in the sense that it's "Helpless"—it can't actually *do* anything for the living or the dead. It can't fix what makes them physically or psychologically "broken."

The speaker's [imagery](#) here seems to draw an implied comparison between the storm-beaten landscape outside—where frail "reeds," or plant stalks, have likely broken in the wind and rain—and the misery of all humanity. (Remember that Thomas wrote the poem during World War I, when much of humanity was experiencing a mass catastrophe, and many badly "broken" bodies littered the battlefields of Europe.)

Again, the speaker is praying that people they know and love (or once "loved") do *not* feel this kind of "pain" and "Helpless[ness]." Basically, the speaker hopes that their loved ones are sleeping peacefully, not lying awake and brooding on the problems of the world.

LINES 15-18

*Like me who have no love which this wild rain
Has not dissolved except the love of death,
If love it be towards what is perfect and
Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.*

Lines 15-18 close the poem with a reflection on "love" and "death." After the [simile](#) in lines 11-14, the speaker draws

another comparison framed in the negative. They hope that no one they've ever cared about is feeling as "Helpless" and loveless as they are:

Like me who have no love which this wild rain
Has not dissolved except the love of death,
If love it be towards what is perfect and
Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

Alone in their "bleak hut" (line 2), the speaker feels as if the pouring rain has "dissolved" all their love for other people. They feel no romantic, familial, or other social attachments—only "the love of death." Earlier, in lines 4-6, the speaker hinted that they might consider death a relief. Now they seem to *desire* death—to love it more than they love life.

However, they qualify their statement in the last two lines. They admit that "love" might not be the right word for their feeling toward death. They wonder if you can really "love" something that's "perfect" and "Cannot [...] disappoint"—if love is too human a feeling for something so inhuman. This phrasing suggests, perhaps, that the *imperfection* and "disappoint[ment]" of human love has increased death's appeal for the speaker. With no fulfilling relationships tying them to life, the speaker would rather die than keep living.

According to the speaker, it's the "tempest," or rainstorm, that "tells" them death "Cannot [...] disappoint." (Notice how [enjambment](#) places heavy emphasis on "Cannot," as if to underline death's power.) The somber, relentless rain—a sign of nature's power over humanity—seems to remind the speaker that death is inevitable. Listening to the storm, the speaker feels loveless, helpless, and doomed, yet reframes these depressing feelings as a kind of acceptance or even anticipation.



SYMBOLS



RAIN

Besides being a literal part of the poem's [setting](#), rain is an important [symbol](#) here. In lines 1-3, the speaker immediately links rain with death: the rain makes the speaker "Remember[] again that I shall die." Like death, a hard rain is somber, relentless, and universal (it falls on everyone, just as death comes for everyone).

The rain also seems to symbolize misfortune and loss more generally. The speaker claims that the "wild" rain has "dissolved" all his loves and attachments, "except [for] the love of death." Symbolically, then, he associates rain with [loss](#), including the eventual loss of his own life. More specifically, he associates it with the natural forces of time and change that *cause* loss. Like nature itself, the rain is vast and powerful

compared to his small life; it will ultimately sweep away his life and everything it meant to him.

Finally, the rainwater represents a kind of purification. The speaker suggests that, when the rain falls on their grave, they will owe it thanks "For washing me cleaner than I have been / Since I was born into this solitude." In this [metaphor](#), the rain seems to baptize the dead, or to wash away their troubles as they transition from life into the afterlife.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-2
- Lines 4-7
- Line 10
- Lines 13-16
- Lines 17-18



POETIC DEVICES

ALLITERATION

Frequent [alliteration](#), combined with steady [meter](#), gives the poem an intense, driving rhythm. Sometimes the alliteration occurs within a single line, as with the /l/, /h/, and /w/ sounds in line 15 and the /d/ sounds in line 16:

Like me **who** have no love **which** this **wild** rain
Has not dissolved except the love of **death**,

Sometimes it flows from one line into the next, as with the /l/ and /s/ sounds in lines 9-10:

Is dying tonight or lying still awake
Solitary, listening to the rain,

A related effect comes from the simple [repetition](#) of certain words, such as "Rain" in line 1:

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain [...]

The repetition of consonant sounds (and whole words) evokes the driving, repetitive sound of the rain itself. Alliteration also helps highlight some of the poem's most thematically important words in the poem, such as "solitude" in line 6 ("Since I was born into this solitude"), "love" in line 15 ("Like me who have no love"), and "death" in line 16 ("Has not dissolved except the love of death"). This is a poem *about* solitude, love (or detachment from love), and the anticipation of death, so it's fitting that the poem's sound effects bring these words to the fore.

Where Alliteration appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** “but”
- **Line 2:** “bleak”
- **Line 4:** “neither,” “nor”
- **Line 5:** “been”
- **Line 6:** “Since,” “born,” “solitude”
- **Line 7:** “rain rains”
- **Line 9:** “lying,” “still”
- **Line 10:** “Solitary,” “listening”
- **Line 12:** “living”
- **Line 13:** “Like”
- **Line 14:** “still,” “stiff”
- **Line 15:** “Like,” “who have,” “love,” “which,” “wild”
- **Line 16:** “dissolved,” “death”
- **Line 18:** “tempest tells”

ASSONANCE

Like [alliteration](#), [assonance](#) adds to the poem's intensely rhythmic quality. In fact, the majority of the poem's [metrically](#) stressed syllables receive additional emphasis from assonance, alliteration, and/or simple [repetition](#) (e.g., the three “rain”s in line 1). As a result, the poem's rhythm is insistent, emphatic, and even hypnotic—much like the drumming of heavy rainfall.

Listen to all the closely repeated vowel sounds in lines 7-9, for example:

Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:
But here I pray that none whom once I loved
Is dying tonight or lying still awake [...]

These lines contain a rapid volley of short /eh/ sounds (“Blessed”/“dead”), long /ay/ sounds (“rain”/“rains”/“pray”), and short /uh/ sounds (“none”/“once”/“loved”), as well as the [internal rhyme](#) of “dying”/“lying,” which shares long and short /i/ sounds with “Is,” “tonight,” and “still” in the same line. Together, these assonant words cover nearly all the stressed syllables in this passage (and a few unstressed syllables as well). All this sound play gives the language a propulsive beat and a richly lyrical quality.

Occasionally, alliteration and assonance join forces to make the rhythm even more emphatic. Examples include “still and stiff” in line 14 and “tempest tells” in line 18.

Where Assonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** “nothing but”
- **Line 3:** “Remembering again,” “I,” “die”
- **Line 5:** “cleaner,” “been”
- **Line 7:** “Blessed,” “dead,” “rain rains”
- **Line 8:** “pray,” “none,” “once,” “loved”
- **Line 9:** “Is dying tonight,” “lying,” “still”
- **Line 12:** “Helpless,” “dead”

- **Line 14:** “still,” “stiff”
- **Line 16:** “except,” “death”
- **Line 18:** “tempest tells”

REPETITION

“Rain” [repeats](#) a number of important words and phrases, often several times over. To take the most obvious example: the word “rain” or “rains” occurs eight times in the poem—not counting the title! Even the specific phrase “wild rain” occurs twice, both times at the end of a line (lines 1 and 15). This relentlessly repetitive language (which is specifically an example of [diacope](#)) mimics the relentlessness of the rain itself.

The other repeating words/phrases further evoke the monotony of the rainstorm; some also draw attention to important themes and concepts in the poem. Much of this is more specifically [polyptoton](#), or repetition built around the variations on the same root word:

- The repetition of “solitude” and “Solitary” (lines 2, 6, and 10) emphasizes the speaker's loneliness.
- The repetition of “die,” “dead,” “dying,” and “death” (lines 3, 7, 9, 12, and 16) underscores the speaker's morbid fascination with death—including their keen awareness of their own mortality.

The diacope of “broken reeds” (lines 13 and 14) helps suggest that, to the speaker, the world, in general, seems broken. They're extremely attuned to the death and suffering around them.

Finally, the repetition of “love” or “loved” in subtly different contexts (lines 8, 15, 16, and 17) highlights the speaker's strange relationship to love. They claim they no longer feel it for other *people*, only for “death”—and they're not even sure *love* is the right word for their acceptance of death's inevitability.

Where Repetition appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** “Rain,” “rain,” “wild rain”
- **Line 2:** “solitude”
- **Line 3:** “die”
- **Line 4:** “rain”
- **Line 6:** “solitude”
- **Line 7:** “dead,” “rain rains”
- **Line 8:** “loved”
- **Line 9:** “dying”
- **Line 10:** “Solitary,” “rain”
- **Line 12:** “among,” “dead”
- **Line 13:** “Like,” “among,” “broken reeds”
- **Line 14:** “broken reeds”
- **Line 15:** “Like,” “love,” “wild rain”

- **Line 16:** "love," "death"
- **Line 17:** "love"

ENJAMBMENT

"Rain" is full of [enjambment](#). Only eight of the poem's 18 lines are [end-stopped](#), in fact. The first five lines are all enjambed, as if to signal the importance of this device in the poem:

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain
On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me
Remembering again that I shall die
And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks
For washing me cleaner than I have been [...]

The length of the sentence, combined with the lack of end-stopping, makes the lines seem to cascade unstoppably down the page, mimicking the unstoppable downpour the speaker is describing.

The poem's second sentence (of only two!) is even longer, stretching from line 7 through line 18. Although it contains more end-stopped lines than the first, it also contains the poem's most unusual and eye-catching enjambment, in lines 17-18:

If love it be towards what is perfect and
Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

In [metrical](#) poems, "and" is almost always an unstressed syllable, and it rarely falls at the end of a line. Here, however, the line breaks dramatically after "and," creating a moment's suspense and placing special emphasis on the word that comes just after.

That word is "Cannot"—which receives even *more* emphasis because it's followed immediately by a [caesura](#). Through this combination of effects, the poem stresses, as strongly as possible, the fact that death *cannot* disappoint. In other words, these closing lines drive home the inevitability of death in no uncertain terms.

Where Enjambment appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-2:** "rain / On"
- **Lines 2-3:** "me / Remembering"
- **Lines 3-4:** "die / And"
- **Lines 4-5:** "thanks / For"
- **Lines 5-6:** "been / Since"
- **Lines 8-9:** "loved / Is"
- **Lines 9-10:** "awake / Solitary"
- **Lines 11-12:** "sympathy / Helpless"
- **Lines 15-16:** "rain / Has"
- **Lines 17-18:** "and / Cannot"

SIMILE

The poem uses several [similes](#), all of which involve water. (Not too surprising, given the poem's title!)

First, the speaker imagines being dead under the rainfall and unable to thank the rain:

For washing me cleaner than I have been
Since I was born into this solitude.

To be dead and "wash[ed]" by rain, this simile suggests, will be a [symbolic](#) purification. The word "solitude" is important here: the speaker feels that life is lonely and difficult, and seems to imagine that the rain on their grave will [figuratively](#) wash away life's troubles.

Later, the speaker prays that no one they know shares their particular kind of "sympathy":

[...] in sympathy
Helpless among the living and the dead,
Like a cold water among broken reeds,

Here, the speaker compares "sympath[izers]" like themselves to "water"—perhaps the cold rainwater pooling on the ground. Specifically, the speaker envisions former "loved" ones sharing their "Helpless" sympathy for all "the living and the dead" they exist "among," then compares these other sympathizers to "cold water among broken reeds, / Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff." Basically, they imagine loved ones' sympathy encompassing a world full of people who've been psychologically "broken" by life, or physically "broken" by death. Yet they describe this sympathy as "cold," in the sense that it can't actually "Help[]" the broken people.

As if all that weren't complex enough, the speaker then compares the other sympathizers to—the speaker!

Like me who have no love which this wild rain
Has not dissolved except the love of death,

Again, all this is framed as a prayer that former "loved" ones are *not* feeling what the speaker is feeling. The speaker hopes that "none whom once I loved" shares their cold and helpless sympathy, or their lack of all "love" besides "the love of death." The complicated, linked similes reflect the meandering flow of the speaker's thoughts as they ponder many different things at once: rain, death, love, loneliness, and so on.

Where Simile appears in the poem:

- **Lines 5-6:** "For washing me cleaner than I have been / Since I was born into this solitude."
- **Lines 11-14:** "in sympathy / Helpless among the living and the dead, / Like a cold water among broken reeds, /

Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,"

- **Lines 15-16:** "Like me who have no love which this wild rain / Has not dissolved except the love of death,"



VOCABULARY

Hut (Line 2) - A small, simple shelter. Here, the word may refer to a structure in a military barracks, such as a [Nissen hut](#).

Reeds (Line 13, Line 14) - Tall, thin plants; stalks or stems.

Myriads (Line 14) - Large numbers; multitudes.

Dissolved (Line 16) - Broken down; disintegrated in water (or as if in water).

Tempest (Line 18) - A severe storm with heavy wind and rain.



FORM, METER, & RHYME

FORM

The poem consists of a single unbroken stanza, which is made up of just two sentences. Its lines are written in unrhymed [iambic pentameter](#), also known as [blank verse](#). That is, they generally follow a five-beat rhythm that alternates unstressed with stressed syllables: da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM.

Combined with the regular [meter](#), the long, winding, rhythmic sentences have an almost hypnotic effect, much like the steady "Rain" the speaker describes. The first sentence (lines 1-6) is actually a sentence *fragment*; its lack of a main verb reflects the speaker's stillness as they listen to the storm outside.

The lines sound all the more lulling—and perhaps more dreary—because they're not varied or punctuated by [rhyme](#). The absence of a [rhyme scheme](#) might also reflect the messy "wild[ness]" of the rain (lines 1 and 15), and the way it seems to have "dissolved" all the loves and attachments that once structured the speaker's life.

Finally, blank verse is a very old, traditional form in English-language poetry. Big-name poets such as William Shakespeare, John Milton, and William Wordsworth all used it in much of their work. As an extended first-person meditation in blank verse, touching on themes of love and death, "Rain" might even be modeled on the Shakespearean [soliloquy](#). (The last line's reference to "the tempest"—the title of one of Shakespeare's plays—could be a clue that the poet had Shakespeare on the brain.)

METER

"Rain" is written in [iambic pentameter](#), which means that its lines typically alternate unstressed with stressed syllables in a five-beat rhythm (da-DUM | da-DUM | da-DUM | da-DUM |

da-DUM). Like most [metrical](#) poems, however, this one contains occasional variations. For example, line 1 is much rhythmically rougher than lines 2-4:

Rain, mid- | night rain, | nothing | but the | wild rain
On this | bleak hut, | and sol- | itude, | and me
Remem- | bering | again | that I | shall die
And nei- | ther hear | the rain | nor give | it thanks [...]

Notice how the uneven stresses in line 1 repeatedly fall on the central word in the poem: "Rain"! The line emphasizes this word three times, as if to underscore just how rainy the weather is. It also emphasizes the word "but," driving home the fact that the weather is nothing *but* rain. By contrast, the next three lines follow the iambic pentameter pattern more or less perfectly, evoking the rain's steady, monotonous hammering.

The poem continues in this same general fashion, maintaining a consistent rhythm overall but switching it up here and there for emphasis. Another notable variation comes with the three consecutive stressed syllables at the end of line 15: "this wild rain." ("Wild" counts as a single syllable for metrical purposes.) Here, the sudden rhythmic variation and intensity reflect the intensity of the rainstorm itself.

RHYME SCHEME

"Rain" has no [rhyme scheme](#). It's written in unrhymed [iambic pentameter](#), or [blank verse](#). (See Meter section for more context.) Blank verse is generally considered a flexible form, one that's easy to adapt to the rhythms of [colloquial](#) English. It's no accident that Shakespeare used blank verse as the backbone of his plays: it can sound "poetic" and "conversational" at the same time.

"Rain" has a similar effect. The [meter](#) gives it a stately, driving rhythm, but the lack of rhyme makes the language sound relatively spontaneous and natural. Lines 1-2, for instance, sound as if the speaker's just thinking aloud:

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain
On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me [...]

Of course, some phrases sound a little less conversational and a little more lyrical ("But here I pray that none whom once I loved," etc.). Still, the unrhymed lines help capture the natural, meandering flow of the speaker's thoughts.



SPEAKER

The poem provides very little information about its first-person speaker. Their name, age, gender, etc. is never specified. They are presented as an ordinary person doing something ordinary: lying awake at night and listening to a rainstorm. Their "solitude" and supposed lack of close attachments ("Like me

who have no love") makes their personal circumstances hard to determine.

The "bleak hut" they're staying in (line 2), as well as their preoccupation with "death" (line 16), may be clues to their situation. Thomas wrote "Rain" during his military training in World War I, so the speaker has been read as a version of the poet, contemplating the deaths of others during the war and confronting the reality that he, too, "shall die." (Thomas died in combat the following year.) If that reading is correct, the "hut" would be a shelter in a military barracks—like hut 51 at Hare Hall camp in Romford, England, where Thomas [lived](#) during his training.

However, nothing in the poem *necessitates* this reading. The speaker never directly refers to war, and they could be living or staying in some other type of "hut." The lack of specificity makes the voice more universally relatable. Soldiers or not, most people, at some point, listen to the rain in a somber mood!



SETTING

The [setting](#) of the poem is a "bleak hut," where the "Solitary" speaker is lying awake at night during a "wild rain[storm]." The type of "hut" isn't specified, but it's most likely a shelter in a military barracks. Thomas wrote the poem while training to serve in World War I, during which time he bunked in hut 51 at the Hare Hall training camp in Romford, England (now part of London).

Likewise, the poem's references to "the dead" (lines 7 and 12) never directly mention war, but were undoubtedly inspired, at least in part, by the war raging at the time. The speaker may be thinking of dead soldiers on the WWI battlefields, many of whom were left unburied out in the elements for a time (i.e., exposed to "the rain"). In fact, "Rain" is often read as a World War I poem in all but name. However, its setting and situation are vague enough that it has a timeless, universal quality as well.



CONTEXT

LITERARY CONTEXT

Despite his obscurity during his lifetime, Edward Thomas (1878–1917) is now considered one of the most talented English poets of the early 20th century, and one of the most distinguished writers whose careers were cut short by World War I. Thomas lived to see only one slim volume of his poems published (*Six Poems*, 1916). His second collection, called simply *Poems* (1917), was nearing publication when he died in combat. "Rain" is among the poems gathered in this second book, and it's often read as an indirect statement on the bloodshed of the war, as well as an eerie foreshadowing of the

poet's own early death. (However, the poem doesn't explicitly mention war, and the speaker's "love of death" hints at other aspects of the poet's biography: for example, Thomas survived multiple suicide attempts.)

Though he didn't gain literary fame in life, Thomas formed a now-famous friendship with the American poet Robert Frost, who lived in England from 1912 to 1915. The friendship was important to both men's development as writers, and Frost—who lived to become the best-known American poet of his time—went on to [elegize](#) Thomas in the poem "[To E.T.](#)" (Frost's classic poem "[The Road Not Taken](#)" also grew out of this friendship; it was in part a joke about Thomas's indecisiveness, one that Thomas [didn't find especially funny](#).) Frost once called Thomas "the only brother I ever had," and he arranged for the first U.S. publication of Thomas's poetry.

The two men were part of a literary circle called the Dymock poets, which also included the famous WWI poet Rupert Brooke (author of "[The Soldier](#)"). The group dissolved after Frost returned to America and Brooke and Thomas died in the war—Brooke due to illness, and Thomas on the battlefield.

In writing "Rain," Thomas drew on one of his earlier prose sketches: a description of heavy rain that originated in his notebooks and later appeared in his travel book *The Icknield Way* (1913). Although the poem is written in highly traditional [blank verse](#), its imagery seems to echo or anticipate some of the experimental "modernist" literature of the same period. For example, "rain," "broken[ness]," and somber landscapes feature prominently in T. S. Eliot's era-defining poem "[The Waste Land](#)" (1922), an indirect poetic response to World War I.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Thomas wrote "Rain" at the height of World War I (1914–1918), which marked the beginning of modern, mechanized warfare and remains one of the deadliest conflicts in world history. Between 15 and 24 million people died in the war, whether from combat, disease, or other causes. The brutal trench warfare that dominated the conflict sometimes left corpses exposed for long stretches before they could be buried properly. Thus, in contemplating "the dead that the rain rains upon" (line 7), the speaker might well be imagining dead soldiers in the open elements, not just corpses in graveyards.

Written in hut 51 of the Hare Hall military training camp in England (the likely inspiration for the "hut" in line 2), "Rain" contemplates a world full of "broken[ness]" and "death." Though it doesn't mention the war explicitly, its grim [imagery](#) seems inspired, at least in part, by the mass slaughter of the period. If the speaker is read as a stand-in for the poet, their "love" and anticipation of "death" may be a premonition of death on the bloody WWI battlefields.

In fact, Thomas *did* die in combat; he fell at the Battle of Arras on April 9, 1917, not long before the release of the book that featured "Rain."



MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- [The Poem Aloud](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBjiWOBvKIY) – Listen to a reading of "Rain." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBjiWOBvKIY>)
- [The Poet's Life and Work](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/edward-thomas) – Read a biography of Thomas at the Poetry Foundation. (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/edward-thomas>)
- [More on Thomas and "Rain"](https://poetryarchive.org/poet/edward-thomas/) – The Poetry Archive's biography of Thomas, including context on the writing of "Rain." (<https://poetryarchive.org/poet/edward-thomas/>)
- [Rain in "The Icknield Way"](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/57097/57097-h/57097-h.htm#Page_270) – Read a prose description of heavy rain in Thomas's 1911 "The Icknield Way," which Thomas is thought to have drawn on in writing the poem. (https://www.gutenberg.org/files/57097/57097-h/57097-h.htm#Page_270)

- [Edward Thomas Remembered](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qC5vyHcZAKc) – A 1967 interview with Thomas's widow, Helen, about her recollections of the poet. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qC5vyHcZAKc>)



HOW TO CITE

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