

Tristan Papallo

Poetry Explication of "Richard Cory"

Comment [I1]: GRADE of 40/40

Humanity on its best day will still be ignorant. So when the day is of a normal variety, should a person expect any less? The race as a whole tends to assume that they know everything, instead of actually grasping for reality. "Richard Cory", a ballad by Edwin Arlington Robinson, represents this idea in just sixteen lines. The disparity between the common townfolk who idolize Richard Cory and the man's tragic end prove that humans can never truly know how others feel.

Comment [I2]: An engaging hook—especially if your reader is a true misanthrope!

The way characters are described may not necessarily be congruent with reality.

Comment [I3]: Your thesis integrates theme without being formulaic. Lovely!

Comment [I4]: BMS in your TS. Give your paragraph a clearer focus and direction.

In "Richard Cory", our first description of the narrator is strikingly different from the man of the title. The narrator does not refer to itself as a single being, but as a part of a group, or "We". This culmination of people looks at Richard Cory, a man who is described through regal words, such as, imperially, crown rather than head, glittered, rich, king, and even pure light, yet see themselves as lesser beings. This fact appears when they describe themselves as on the pavement, as if Richard could walk above it, and they could only marvel at how he floated. They also work hard to be like this man they idolize. It is through these distinctions that we find the narrator unreliable, for they have lost sight of the man through his glowing aura, and do not try to find his true being.

Comment [I5]: Use literary language to describe this idea: the narrator uses the first person plural pronoun to describe the collective.

Comment [I6]: Use QM when you quote from the text, even if it's an individual word or a small phrase.

Comment [I7]: Insightful idea!

A ballad has a certain formula. It is sad, has sixteen lines, and tells a story.

Comment [I8]: T and TS? Connect your paragraph more meaningfully.

"Richard Cory" has sixteen lines, tells an interesting story, but it is the third rule that makes this poem stand out from the rest of its poetic brethren, it is only sad near the end.

Comment [I9]: CS? Use a dash here for effect.

The effect of changing the tone startles the reader, for they do not see Richard's fate coming towards them until the last to lines of the ballad. The volta is shocking, and not because a man committed suicide, but a man the reader regards in a higher light. Yes, once the again, a poet has led their audience into surprise, shock even. By allowing the readers to only hear from the corrupted narrator, they can only envision Richard as a god who cares about the lowly mortals at his feet, for they are not given any other definition of the man. The audience does not know the man anymore than the townsfolk, yet they judge him by the same standards.

Comment [I10]: Good use of literary terminology. But, since the ending is so shocking, wouldn't quoting from the text here be effective?

Perception can be one of humanities greatest flaws. As a collection, the race judges before getting to know one another, or the world around them for that matter. These perceptions are rarely questioned, and when they are, it's only because they were proven wrong. "Richard Cory" is a slap in the face of all Homo Sapiens, for everyone who reads this Pitfall Plant falls into its literary trap, and will not realize it until it is too late, and their shame is being digested.

Comment [I11]: AP?

Comment [I12]: Lovely botanical analogy to end your explication!