

Title: "Richard Cory"

By: Edwin Arlington Robinson

- P: When Richard Cory came into town everyone stopped to look at him;
He had all the looks of a gentleman: he was well-groomed, practically prince-like.
He always went about things quietly and with dignity, and he was always friendly
to everyone.
Just getting to see him was exciting for us: his "Good Morning" elevated our heart
rates, and he practically glimmered as he glided by.
The guy was loaded—the richest dude in town—and charming and well-
mannered in every way.
The bottom line is we thought had it all and we gladly would have traded our lives
with his.
So we kept at our menial jobs, day after day, doing without much, and
sometimes hating what little we did have;
And then on one pleasant summer night, Richard Cory killed himself.
- L: Extremely direct language, using some British language ("pavement" for sidewalk,
etc.), with very little figurative language; the words used to describe RC make him
sound royal—"imperially slim," "gentleman from sole to crown," and "richer than a
king"--this is in direct CONTRAST to the kind of life the townspeople live, where
they "worked," "waited," "went without," and "cursed."
- O: The organization is 16 lines, divided into 4 four-line stanzas, with regular rhyme
scheme--ABAB CDCD EFEF GHGH.
- T: The tone of this poem helps create the shocking and ironic effect of the final line of
the poem. All information is stated **directly**, and **matter-of-factly**, about a
celebrated citizen who surprises everyone with his suicide, with a bit of **adoration**
and then **reluctance** in revealing the final detail.
- T: The pressure to seem perfect often conceals and increases immense pain or
dissatisfaction;
The perception of others can become a burden too heavy for some individuals to
bear;
The discrepancy between appearances and reality (the public self and the inner
self), when discovered, frequently causes confusion and disappointment;
All the good fortune the world can offer is meaningless to a discontented soul;
The burden of perceived perfection can become painfully isolating;
Adoration is not an adequate substitute for genuine interaction and acceptance.
- S: Context—Richard Cory Subtext—appearances & coveting/jealousy
- S: The speaker is a citizen of the town, and one of RC's many admirers, who is
probably shocked by his final act.

Assigned paragraph format. Yes, you must follow this format.
Not following the format=not earning credit.

TS—Topic Sentence (Title, author, genre, and device must be mentioned)

E1—First example sentence (cite several examples of the device)

Comm 1.1—First commentary statement for E1 (reflect on the significance of the selected examples in the poem)

Comm 1.2—Second commentary statement for E1 (reflect on the significance of the selected examples as they relate to the thematic issue)

E2—Second example sentence (cite more examples of the SAME device)

Comm 2.1—First commentary statement for E2 (again, reflect on the significance of the selected examples in the poem)

Comm 2.2—Second commentary statement for E2 (reflect on the significance of the selected examples as they relate to the thematic issue)

TO—Thematic Observation (Close with a sentence that includes a full statement of one of the poem’s themes, as revealed by the device & its examples you selected)

And now, a little paragraph about the effect of **diction** upon revealing a theme of “Richard Cory”:

Edwin Arlington Robinson employs contrast in “Richard Cory” to reveal the poem’s meaning (TS). The speaker refers to Cory as “gentlemanly,” “imperial slim,” “clean favored,” “richer than a king,” and “always human” (E₁). The townspeople love and admire him; considering him worthy of such adulation even though they do not know Cory beyond his image and observed behaviors (Comm₁₋₁). The speaker indicates everyone in town wishes to switch places with their local idol, the idealized Richard Cory—who lives a seemingly (to them) perfect life (Comm₁₋₂). Meanwhile, the regular townspeople’s way of life provide a sharp contrast to Cory’s perceived perfection, as they “worked,” “waited,” “went without,” and “cursed” (E₂). The townspeople’s struggle to provide and survive sheds some light on their infatuation with Richard Cory (Comm₂₋₁). Because he seems so kind, so rich, and so perfect, the hobby of watching and adoring him functions as an escape from their daily drudgery (Comm₂₋₂). The townspeople’s fixation adds greater shock to the revelation of Cory’s suicide, and these contrasts underscore the idea that adoration of a person based on perceptions alone can create a pressure too heavy for that person to maintain or endure (TO).