

**DETECTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE THEMES IN RICHARD CORY:
SCRUTINIZING THE ISSUE FROM A DEEPER VIEW**

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ABSTRACT: *This study is designed to investigate and discuss about the themes of one of the most celebrated poems in the world of literature entitled 'Richard Cory'. In effect, this study is proposed to find out and shed light on all the themes of this poem. To reach the aim of the study, some of the main subjects, topics, and points which can be related to the goal of article are introduced, explained, and discussed. Afterword, they are followed by a precise discussion and conclusion. On the whole, this study attempts to identify all the themes of Edwin Arlington Robinson's most famous poem. For the most part, this article discerns, investigates, and highlights the features which present all the themes of the poem, or to be more exact, it tries to uncover and shed light on the messages which create and represent some literary masterpiece so called Richard Cory, in detail, and from a deeper view.*

KEYWORDS: Richard Cory, Themes, Town People, Glittering, King

INTRODUCTION

People communicate not merely for transferring information for businesslike concrete motives; they also deliver and express feelings and attitudes. Telling a jest, passing the time in discussion and salutation and welcoming old friends are some specimens, and poetry is another (Brooks and Warren, 1976). Some proposals and schemes comprising many involving values, emotions, feelings, attitudes, decrees, rulings, and findings cannot be carried through communicating routine concrete information or with scientific meticulousness or accuracy. Like science, in reality, literature (and above all poetry) uses a particular language for the purposes of precision in matters different from science (Ibid).

In effect, poetry is a form of literature that uses aesthetic and rhythmic (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013; and Webster, 2013; www.Dictionary.com assets of language such as phonaesthetics, sound symbolism, and metre so as to induce and create meanings in addition to, or in place of, the prosaic or straightforward apparent meaning.

On the other hand, as Brooks and Warren (1960) state, "Poetry gives us knowledge. It is a knowledge of ourselves in relation to the world of experience, and to that world considered, not statistically, but in terms of human purposes and values" (quoted in Preface).

On the subject of poetry, it is worth mentioning that we should direct our attention toward two very significant terms in poetry, namely, experience and meaning, the very heart of poetry. In

this case, Perrine (1963) speaking of the numerous forms of literature, counting poetry, declares that they “widen and sharpen our contacts with existence. Their concern is with experience” (p. 4). Then more specifically about the poet Perrine (Ibid) states, “He creates new experiences for the reader ... in which the reader can participate and which he may use to give him a greater awareness and understanding of his world” (p. 4). Brooks and Warren (1976), on the other hand, put into words a reader's “experience of the poem --an experience that is at first immediate in its impact and then gradually acquires greater and greater resonance” (Preface ix).

Concerning the close relationship and association between experience and emotion they further believe that “emotional expression is an essential element of poetry” (p. 2). Again “poetry springs from the poet's ability to perceive meaning and significance even in scenes that are in themselves commonplace” (p. 93).

The poet then is much concerned with transferring the meaning of emotional experience. This transmission which appears in the procedure of writing is an art form. In this sense, Corbin et al. (1963) are of the idea that “When you talk or write, you have a purpose -- you want to make others understand what you are thinking or feeling, or let them know what you have seen or done, or explain what you want them to do.” (p. 2).

One of the most famous poems which is a feat or a masterpiece in the context of the world literature is called *Richard Cory*. The poet of this renowned poem is Edwin Arlington Robinson. This poem comprises multiple themes; however, no study until now has ever investigated the numerous themes of this poem. This article tries to find out, scrutinize, and discern all the themes of this poem in detail and discuss about them.

SUMMARY

“Richard Cory” is about a man who looks perfect on the outside. He has got money and good looks, and admired by all of the people of the nearby town and he is the envy of them. Guys desire to be in his place and they wish to be him. Girls want to be with him. But then, in the very last lines of the poem, the inconceivable happens; Richard Cory, despite his money, good looks, and his high status in society, goes home and shoots himself in the head.

DISCUSSION

In the following section, the themes of Richard Cory are found out and discussed in detail.

Richard Cory Theme of Descriptions and Interpretations of Reality

Every person observes and perceives the world differently and in his own way. You might even say that we each have our own version of reality. For the townsfolk of "Richard Cory," the main character who is Richard Cory has it all: good looks, lots of money, nice clothes, a friendly behavior. What more could you want out of life? But Richard Cory's own reality is diverse—so different, in effect, that he assassinates himself at the end of the poem. What do the townspeople

see in Richard Cory that he does not see in himself? What does he see in himself that the townspeople cannot see? Certainly they have massively different descriptions, perceptions, and interpretations of reality.

This poem, indeed, validates or demonstrates that we can never correctly, rightly, and accurately understand anybody else's description, perception, and interpretation of reality. On the other hand, Richard Cory's suicide is a lesson to us all that our yearnings, wishes, and desires can blind us to reality.

The Lines of the poem Related to the Theme of Descriptions and Interpretations of Reality

In the Richard Cory poem, there are three main quotes which indicate the theme of Perceptions, Descriptions and Interpretations of Reality. They are as follows:

Quote No.1

*Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim. (1-4)*

The poem makes a discrepancy between the “people on the pavement” and Richard Cory. He does not live downtown with them. He is not one of those people. He is a stranger. But still, the people of the town think he is a real champion or better to say, a real winner. He is a gentleman from head to toe. Nice clothes, nice figure, form, and body, nice attitude—he gives the impression and appears like an outstanding and exceptional great guy.

Quote No. 2

*And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.*

*And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place. (5-12)*

Townspeople believe that Richard Cory is very magnificent and wonderful. Indeed, in these two stanzas, the poem really illustrates and clarifies how Richard gives the impression or seems to the townspeople. He is wealthy and polite. He has got great clothes, and he has the object of more than one crush. Everyone wants to be like Richard Cory.

Quote No. 3

*And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head. (15-16)*

We face with an unexpected moment here; after the whole poem that tells us how perfect Richard Cory is, we end on this: the man kills himself. As it turns out, his life wasn't so flawless, perfect, or ideal in spite of everything. We guess we cannot ever know exactly what is going on in someone else's head. From these last lines of the poem, it can only be inferred and deduced that Richard Cory's reality was quite different from what the townspeople expected, estimated, and assumed.

Richard Cory Theme of Isolation

Richard Cory's had loads of things: money, good looks, nice clothes, chivalrous and gracious attitude. The speaker of the poem ensures and certifies that we know about all those things. However, we never hear about Richard Cory's relationships and interactions with others. That is to say, it is not indicated or even not implied in the poem that whether he has any loved one such as a girlfriend, a beloved, any member of family, and so on. In fact, are uncertain and we doubt it. We may also think that the poem would not end as it does, with Richard Cory's death, if he did have those things.

In reality, we can achieve that if there was not such distance between Richard and the townspeople, if he had any loved one, if he had any close friend, if he had any family member waiting for him, and so on, he would not kill himself. Therefore, although the poem doesn't elucidate it for us overtly and explicitly, we can come to this point that Richard Cory's isolation lead to his suicide. In other words, The absence of Richard's loved ones from the poem suggests that he, in effect, *had* no loved ones. That sad, sad isolation was the motive for his suicide.

The following lines of the poem support the theme of isolation:

The Lines of the poem Related to the Theme of Isolation

Quote No. 1

*Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim. (1-4)*

When the poem starts, a concrete division and a real difference can be seen and felt between Richard Cory and the “we” who speak the poem. Richard Cory is a whole gentleman, whereas the “we” are the “people on the pavement”. In other words, the “we” are the lower class people who are constantly walking down the street and who continually admire and respect Richard Cory.

Quote No. 2

*And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.*

*And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place. (5-12)*

Everybody thought Richard Cory was accurately “everything.” Even though their only interaction or communication with him is an infrequent “good morning,” the “we” of the poem think they know everything about Richard Cory. They wish that they were him and they were in his place.

Quote No. 3

*So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head. (13-16)*

Nevertheless, undeniably things are not always as they seem. The townspeople work hard and they do not have enough meat to eat, but they are still a “we.” They are unified, united and joint in a community—unlike that stranger Richard Cory, who is venerated and respected by the people on the pavement, but who is not one of them. In fact, we can strongly guess that this isolation from the community and thus, his loneliness was the reason for his suicide.

To be more precise, the poem expresses the feeling of community through several methods. First, the speaker of the poem itself is a collective group of townspeople who give their feelings and reactions to Cory. This can be seen from the first-person, plural subject ‘we’ that is seen in lines 2, 11, 12, and 13.

There is never a reference to one single person except Richard Cory, which allows the reader to see that Cory is set aside as a figure who stands alone instead of being part of a group.

Richard Cory Theme of Appearances

Seemingly and according to what is being said, Richard Cory is the gorgeous and handsome guy. He has got a nice slim figure, wonderful lovely clothes, and approachable kindly treatment. And, parenthetically, he has also got a great deal of money to spend on and use for looking good. But appearances can be deceiving (as it was mentioned in the “Theme of Perceptions, Descriptions, and Interpretations of Reality”). In the sense that good looks do not all the time mean a happy life. We might all think that looking very nice, or having the money to spend on our appearance, might make our lives just *that much* better. But even Richard Cory, the richest, luckiest, and superlative-looking man everywhere, is not made happy by his good looks or money. As a critical remark, in reality, there are more important things in life than looking good.

The poem comprises numerous royal words such as “imperially”, “slim”, and so on to refer to Richard Cory. Richard Cory’s good looks, ostentatious as well as fashionable clothes, and on the whole, his wealth are the main reasons that the townspeople admire and respect him. Richard Cory would not deserve the respect that he does without those fashionable and stylish garments.

That is to say, the townsfolk respected him because of his appearance and cloths not because of himself, his personality, or what he was. This situation also designates and indicates the superficial views of the people. The following lines of the poem support the theme of appearances:

The Lines of the poem Supporting the Theme of Appearances

Quote No. 1

*He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim. (3-4)*

Richard Cory was a gentleman from head to toe, the speaker expresses us. And explores and looks into his diction. He employs regal and magnificent words such as “crown” and “imperially”. Richard Cory’s appearance is nearly kingly.

Quote No. 2

*And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked. (5- 8)*

Richard Cory may be kingly, but he is furthermore chill about it. He is not flaunting. He is human to the people nearby him, and he is not outfitted, furnished, and dressed extravagantly or outrageously. Still, the guy has a bit of arrogance. His good looks and dress send hearts racing.

Quote No. 3

*And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place. (9-12)*

And here is another allusion or indication to kings. The townspeople think that Richard Cory has everything a guy could dream of.

Quote No. 4

*And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head. (15-16)*

Nevertheless not even wealth, good looks, or nice dresses and clothes can make a man gratified and satisfied. In spite of all of his riches, wealth, valued possessions, and good looks, Richard Cory kills himself. Not even fancy duds, a sweet face, or an “imperial” figure can guarantee happiness and contentment in life.

Richard Cory Theme of Spiritual Emptiness

The belief and judgment that wealth, power, or high social status can bring happiness is interrogated after the reader hears of Cory's fate. Though the townsfolk want so much to be like Cory, they do not realize that they have something that Cory could not have and commits suicide for the reason that he cannot have it. Both Cory and the townspeople feel that the grass on the other person's side of the fence is greener when it is in point of fact the same color.

In effect, the poem "Richard Cory" is a specimen of happiness not being generated by achieving the man's dream of wealth, status, and power. Cory has gained all that the Dream has to offer, but he lacks in one rudimentary or basic need: community. The townspeople are envious of Cory albeit they are in reality richer than him. Cory is envious of the townspeople while he is financially richer than them. Accordingly, the idea that "the grass is always greener" remains true in the sense that people cannot recognize what they have and can only be envious of what others have. On the other hand, Richard Cory, indeed, had everything in his life except the light which refers to spiritual values. It is the only thing Cory lacked. Life for him was meaningless for the reason that he lacked spiritual values and he lived on a material level.

The following lines of the poem support the theme of Spiritual Emptiness:

The Lines of the poem Related to the Theme of Spiritual Emptiness

Quote No. 1

*Whenever Richard Cory went downtown,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.*

Townspeople identify and observe Cory as one to be admired, one who has a perfection beyond their dominion, but one, however, to make them "wish that we were in his place." The time of the poem is a time in which the "people on the pavement" felt they had been overlooked and disregarded and left at the compassion of the faiths or hopes.

The mentioned lines indicate the voice of poor people—"we people on the pavement"—in reality, they felt that they had been ignored during the difficult times of their lives and left at the mercy of the trusts and the people of the upper class who are wealthy and rich. This belief and this kind of thinking or feeling is indeed, a sort of unthankfulness to God. Therefore, the theme of spiritual emptiness can be achieved from the mentioned lines.

Quote No. 2

*And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.*

It appears to us that everyone's got a crush on this guy. Pulses are fluttering and it gives the impression that he is glittering. Guys want to be like Richard Cory, and girls want to be with him. According to the townfolk, he is the luckiest man in the world. In these lines of the poem, again, a sort of unthankfulness to God can clearly be heard. Therefore, the theme of spiritual emptiness can for a second time be achieved from the mentioned lines.

Quote No. 3

*And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.*

The lines in this stanza tell us even more about the guy; interjection here, the “yes, richer than a king” that we find between those dashes. This line gives us the feeling that we are being addressed openly and straight by the speaker of the poem. They want to convince us that not only is Richard Cory rich, he is, indeed, super-rich. The speaker summarizes his words about the characteristics of Richard Cory in a sentence and says: “we thought that he was everything”. This man had good looks, good elegances, heaps of money. And not merely did he *have* everything, they thought he *was* everything. And, evidently, everyone wished that they were in his place. In fact, the spiritual emptiness of those people can be felt once more.

Quote No. 4

*So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;*

As Robinson contrasts the idealized Cory perceived by the town with the real man, he attributes a range of emotions to both the ordinary people and the extraordinary man. The town, for example, is in awe of Cory, he is so far above those “on the pavement” that a few words from him can set pulses to flutter. They admire his manners, his money, and his clean, slim appearance. And, undeniably, they envy him and wish to be him: “we thought he was everything/To make us wish that we were in his place”. He has what they do not have, and he is what they cannot be. They feel unhappy, dissatisfied, and discontent with what they do have – the “bread” they curse, and they hold their fire just for something better, some “light” in their dark lives. In effect, they are not grateful for what they have; in the sense that they are not thankful to God for all the blessings and riches that He Has given to them. Indeed, they do not see their own riches and blessings, and thus, it is a kind of spiritual emptiness again.

Quote No. 5

*And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head*

The contrast between Cory and the people (the people of the community and the wonderful heroic structure of Cory), apparently weighted in favor of Cory in the final three stanzas. It is the key to the poem. The customary manner, style, and behavior raise or uplift him still more in

men's regard: his apparent lack of arrogance, his rejection of the renown and distinction that his fellows would accord him. However, ironically, Cory's suicide causes a complete reversal of roles in the poem; in the sense that as Cory is deposed, the people are congruently raised. The contrast between the townsfolk and him is sustained in the last stanza.

However, they went on living. For the narrator, there is no meat to eat at the dinner-time, and after so many meals lacking it, he begins to curse the cheap bread that he does not have to eat. Richard Cory, a wealthy man as he was, did not live. He died instead. In fact, if he believed in some spiritual power and value in his heart, he would not appear so weak to end his own life. That is to say, if he was spiritually strong, his mind would never be filled with such dark thoughts. Thus, the two final lines of the poem clarify Richard Cory's spiritual emptiness.

ADDITIONAL FINAL POINTS RELATED TO THE DISCUSSION: LIST OF THE THEMES GRASPED FROM THE POEM

According the analysis of the themes by the researcher and the mentioned matters in the discussion part, the themes of this poem can be summarized in detail as follows:

- The grass is always greener on the other side.
- All that glitters is not gold.
- Envy is the curse of human existence.
- There is no perfect human being in the world.
- No one knows the darkness of the human heart.
- Every moment in life is full of light. You should not waste your time 'waiting for the light'.
- Life without friends is not worth living.
- One of the main factors which keeps the man alive is social unity.
- Appearances do not always reflect the true picture of man's inner being.
- This poem is proof that material wealth, good looks, and fancy things just cannot guarantee our happiness.
- Even the richest, handsomest man in the world has problems.
- We humans are complicated beings, and our appearances don't always match our realities.
- We cannot ever know another person.
- Appearances can be very deceiving.

- People see only what they envy such as material values, wealth, and so on and they forget what really keeps them alive like social unity and many other things which they have. In other words, people only see what they envy like material things, material values, and wealth, but they don't see what they have.
- We cannot know people simply by seeing them walk down the street and occasionally spoiling and treating in courteous, gracious, and polite small talk.
- Wealth does not necessarily bring happiness.
- We should not judge people by their appearance.
- Money brings neither happiness nor tranquility and peace.
- You can buy house, but you cannot buy home.
- Grandeur, Greatness, or magnificence is not having so much money and wealth.
- Perfect existence does not mean having so much wealth and material things.
- Richness in life cannot be measured individually by either happiness, or wealth. Rather, 'richness' is the consequence of a fulfilled life.
- Even those who look like they have it all, might be unhappy in some profound, unseen way.
- Rich people are not happy with their life, and the poor think that wealth is the guarantee of happiness.
- Poor people are not the only sufferers in life. That is to say, poverty is not the only problem in life.
- Happiness is not a matter of being rich or powerful. To have a high status, a lot of money or to be popular are no guarantees of happy life.
- Those who get something like something else, something better, and those who do not get it are dreaming of it, somewhere.
- People who are caught up in their own pain fail to see the torment in others.
- Human beings should feel happy and satisfied with what they do have and they should be always grateful (to God).
- There is no real happiness in this world.
- Human beings cannot recognize what they have and can only be envious of what others have.

- Man always wishes to have more and more material things; the more he has/gets, he wants more and he never becomes full.
- The material things and the material concerns make the man blind; he cannot see his own possessions and riches, and also the gifts and blessings that God has given him.
- If human being has everything, but he does not have spiritual value, he has Nothing.
- Material possession and fine appearance don't ensure happiness and peace of mind.
- True wealth is not money, but it is the ability of working to achieve money.
- The real wealth is being able to work hard and achieve money.
- Life (everybody's) is full of frustration and tragedy. Everybody carries his own tragedy.
- When man is spiritually strong and when he believes in spiritual values, depression and frustration are two quite meaningless issues.
- Human beings should be grateful to God for the riches and blessings and generally whatever He has given to them.
- Money is not everything.

CONCLUSION

Richard Cory, this sixteen line short poem tells a lot about human irony. As it was seen and discussed in this paper, *Richard Cory* comprises numerous themes. In effect, the reader of this poem can learn a lot of things or better to say, many moral and social lessons from it. In other words, this poem has lots of moral and social as well as spiritual implications for human beings, their relationships, and their lives which can be adapted to the man of any period of time.

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