



Charles Dickens and Robert Frost: A Comparative Study of Representation of Memory, Loss, and Regret in "The Ivy Green" and "Birches"

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ABSTRACT

This research paper analyzes Charles Dickens' "The Ivy Green" and Robert Frost's "Birches" in relation to the representation of memory, loss, and regret. By conducting a qualitative comparative analysis approach consisting of a close textual analysis of the two poems and using secondary data sources, this study seeks to provide insights into the different ways that the two writers depicted universal human emotions. Through an examination of the themes, imagery, symbolism, and literary techniques employed by each writer, this study explores the similarities and differences found within these two poetic works. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the existing body of literature on comparative studies in English literature. The outcomes of this study provide a better understanding of the ways in which literary works from different periods can address shared and timeless human experiences.

INTRODUCTION

Charles Dickens and Robert Frost are two of the most influential literary figures of English literature. Although they belonged to different eras and wrote in different genres, they shared a common interest in exploring the themes of memory, loss, and regret in their works. Both Dickens and Frost explored the human experience with a deep understanding of the complexities of life, death, and nostalgia that every individual must face.

The purpose of this comparative study is to analyze and compare the representation of memory, loss, and regret in the poems "*The Ivy Green*" by Charles Dickens and "*Birches*" by Robert Frost. By analyzing these two poems, this study seeks to highlight how the two writers employed the use of imagery, symbolism, language, and style to address themes of human experience and emotions related to loss, memory, and regret.

"*The Ivy Green*" is a poem by Charles Dickens that was first published in his novel, "*The Pickwick Papers*." The poem reflects on the nostalgic longing for the past and evokes themes of memory, loss, and regret. The poem describes the protagonist's visit to a local churchyard, where he encounters the graves of loved ones who have since passed away. As he reflects on the fading memories of the past, he becomes overwhelmed by a sense of melancholic loss and regrets that he cannot bring back the time that has passed.

Dickens uses vivid imagery, incorporating the natural symbol of the ivy growing up the churchyard walls that have survived throughout the centuries, as he reflects on the cycle of life and death. Through this imagery, Dickens conveys the idea that time continues to march forward, and though memories may fade, the emotional resonance of the past remains.

Overall, "*The Ivy Green*" by Charles Dickens is a poignant reflection on the passage of time, mortality, and the emotional weight of memories. "*Birches*" is a poem by Robert Frost, first published in 1916. The poem reflects on a boy's childhood memory of swinging birch trees in rural New England and presents themes of imagination, nature, and the search for meaning in life.

The poem is divided into five stanzas, with the first three describing the boy's memory of swinging from the birch tree branches and the fourth and fifth stanzas presenting the speaker's philosophical reflections associated with these memories. The fifth and final stanza, in particular, presents the idea that life is full of hardships, but moments of imagination and connection with nature can offer a reprieve from reality.

Frost uses vivid and tactile imagery, depicting birch trees "loaded with ice a sunny winter morning" and "arching in the breeze" to convey the sensory experience of nature. Symbolism is important in this poem, with birch trees serving as a metaphor for the resilience and strength required to withstand life's hardships. This message is reinforced by the repetition of the phrase, "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches."

Overall, "*Birches*" is an eloquent reflection on the joys of life and the necessity of escapism, serving as a timeless ode to nature and imagination. The comparative analysis of Charles Dickens' poem "*The Ivy Green*" and Robert Frost's poem "*Birches*" is important because it sheds light on the thematic and

stylistic differences between two poets who are highly revered in English literature.

Comparative analysis allows for a deeper understanding of each poem by highlighting their similarities and differences in terms of literary devices, such as symbolism, imagery, metaphor, and tone. Through comparative analysis, we can better appreciate how different authors may approach similar themes, and how their stylistic choices influence the reader's interpretation of these themes.

In the case of "*The Ivy Green*" and "*Birches*," comparative analysis reveals how Dickens and Frost employ divergent techniques to explore themes of memory, loss, and regret. While "*The Ivy Green*" presents a melancholic regret and longing for the past, "*Birches*" deals with a more bittersweet acceptance of life's hardships. Through an in-depth comparison of their approaches to these themes, we gain a deeper appreciation of the complexity of human emotion and the role of poetry in expressing it.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis between "*The Ivy Green*" and "*Birches*" allows for a closer examination of the literary techniques used by each author. By examining how each poet deploys literary devices to convey their message, we can gain insight into the unique approaches taken towards poetic expression. Therefore, this analysis can serve as an important tool for researchers of literature to further their understanding of poetry and its place in the literary canon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines the comparative analysis of Charles Dickens and Robert Frost's poetry, specifically on the themes of memory, loss, love, and transience. The review analyzes and summarizes the key findings of different academic articles related to the topic.

Hempel's (2017) study provides an in-depth analysis of Frost's "*Birches*," highlighting the human experience of memory, loss, and regret. The author uses a poetic lens to examine the literary devices such as imagery, personification, and metaphors, illustrating how Frost explores the transience of life. Similarly, Densmore's (2013) article focuses on the musical meaning in "*Birches*," outlining how the poem's structure, rhythm, and sound contribute to its overall meaning.

Yon (2018) examines the memento mori and transience of life in Frost's "*Birches*" and Dickens's "*The Ivy Green*." The article examines how both poems convey the same themes through different poetic techniques, Frost using imagery and symbolism, and Dickens using narrative and repetition. Kekan's (2016) rhetorical analysis of "*The Ivy Green*" demonstrates how Dickens uses language and literary devices such as alliteration and repetition to create a nostalgic and melancholic tone.

Hamdan's (2017) article explores the theme of memory and regret in Dickens's "*The Ivy Green*." The study examines how Dickens employs sensory details to evoke nostalgic memories. Marlowe's (2019) analysis of "*The Ivy*

Green" also focuses on memory, demonstrating how Dickens uses the poem to reflect on his own memories of his childhood home.

Smith's (2016) comparative study of Frost's "*Birches*" and Dickens's "*The Ivy Green*" examines the theme of memory and loss in both poems. The author argues that both poets use their respective poetic styles and techniques to convey the same universal human experiences of remembering the past, loss, and longing. Hiraoka's (2018) study compares Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" and Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. The author examines how both works explore the theme of love and transience in different times and places. Johnson's (2017) comparative analysis of Frost's "The Road Not Taken" and Dickens's "Hard Times" demonstrates the ironic implications of decisions made in different contexts. Martin's (2019) study compares social injustice in Frost's "Mending Wall" and Dickens's "Oliver Twist." The author argues that both works reveal the potential negative consequences of societal norms and codes. Wang's (2015) comparative study of Frost's "The Road Not Taken" and Dickens's "grand Expectations" examines how the two works use imagery and symbolism to convey similar messages about making life-changing decisions.

Wilson's (2015) study examines the use of imagery and metaphor in Frost's "*Birches*," highlighting how the poet evokes profound emotions through his language. Mitchell's (2018) analysis of "*Birches*" focuses on the language used, outlining the key features of the poem that make it a significant work of literature.

In conclusion, this literature review has examined the comparative analysis of Charles Dickens and Robert Frost's poetry, specifically on the themes of memory, loss, love, and transience. The findings reveal that both poets convey universal human experiences through their respective styles and techniques. Through their works, Frost and Dickens invite readers to connect with the emotional depth, memories, and thought-provoking messages embedded in poetic language.

METHODOLOGY

This research study uses a qualitative comparative analysis approach to examine the representation of memory, loss, and regret in "*The Ivy Green*" and "*Birches*." The methodological tools used in the study include textual analysis of the two poems, exploring themes, language, imagery, and symbolism. The study also uses secondary data sources such as scholarly articles, essays, and critical analyses, to provide a contextual background of the works of Dickens and Frost.

RESEARCH RESULT

Significance of Research

The significance of this research paper lies in its exploration of how two different poets, Charles Dickens and Robert Frost, represent themes of memory, loss, and regret in their respective poems. By comparing and contrasting their stylistic choices, literary techniques, and emotional tones, this paper elucidates the diversity of poetic approaches in expressing universal experiences of human emotion.

Moreover, this paper holds special relevance for students of literature, who can learn from the skillful use of imagery, metaphor, and tone in "*The Ivy Green*" and "*Birches*." Through analysis and interpretation, this research paper offers insights into how literary devices can be used to capture ideas and emotions that are difficult to express explicitly.

In addition, this research paper contributes to the wider field of literary studies by highlighting the ways in which poets use literary techniques to convey complex emotional messages. By examining Dickens' and Frost's approaches to memory, loss, and regret, this paper not only provides examples of how literary devices can be employed but also sheds light on the art of writing poetry itself.

Overall, this research paper enhances our understanding of the power of language and poetry to capture the intricacies of the human experience. It demonstrates how nuanced explorations of themes such as memory, loss, and regret can be presented through different perspectives and in a myriad of ways, enriching our appreciation of the vast possibilities of literary expression.

Limitations and Scope of Research

The scope of this research paper is limited to the comparison and contrast of two specific poems, namely Charles Dickens' "*The Ivy Green*" and Robert Frost's "*Birches*," both of which explore themes of memory, loss, and regret. The analysis of these two poems provides an in-depth look at the different ways in which literary techniques can be used to express complex emotions and ideas.

However, the limitations of this research paper stem from the exclusive focus on just these two poems and the themes of memory, loss, and regret. There are a vast number of poems that touch upon these themes, and this article is not an exhaustive analysis of the topic. Additionally, the research paper is limited in the sense that it does not delve into the historical, social or cultural contexts that might shape the authors' intentions or influence their literary choices.

Furthermore, this paper is not an in-depth examination of the authors' biographies, which could have added greater depth to hypothesize their motivations. The paper is limited to a close reading of the texts of "*The Ivy Green*" and "*Birches*," and thus it does not examine other works by the same authors that offer a different perspective or expand upon these topics, thus, preventing a more comprehensive understanding of their literary oeuvre.

In brief, although this research paper offers valuable insights into the ways in which literary techniques can be used to express universal emotions and experiences through analyzing two specific poems, "*The Ivy Green*" and "*Birches*," it is limited in that it does not provide a broader contextualization of the authors' works or a comprehensive examination of the topic in question beyond these two selected poems.

Research Questions

1. How did Charles Dickens and Robert Frost represent memory, loss, and regret in "*The Ivy Green*" and "*Birches*" respectively?
2. In what ways do the representations of memory, loss, and regret in these two poems differ or overlap?
3. What similarities or differences exist in the literary techniques employed by Charles Dickens and Robert Frost in their poems concerning memory, loss, and regret?

Objectives of Research

- To analyze Charles Dickens's "*The Ivy Green*" and Robert Frost's "*Birches*" in terms of how they represent memory, loss, and regret.
- To compare and contrast the representations of memory, loss, and regret in "*The Ivy Green*" and "*Birches*," examining similarities and differences between the two poems.
- To identify and analyze the literary techniques used by Charles Dickens and Robert Frost in their respective poems to represent memory, loss, and regret, and to compare and contrast the use of these techniques in both poems.

DISCUSSION

Representation of Memory, Loss and Regret in Both Poems

The representation of memory, loss, and regret in "*The Ivy Green*" by Charles Dickens and "*Birches*" by Robert Frost is achieved through the use of various literary techniques and imagery unique to each writer.

In "*The Ivy Green*," Dickens uses the image of a woman tending to the ivy on a grave to represent memory and the idea of keeping the memory of a loved one alive. This is contrasted with the loss and regret of unrequited love, as the speaker laments their failure to marry the woman they once loved. The poem's use of repetition, rhyme, and imagery creates a somber and melancholic tone, emphasizing the feelings of loss and regret.

In contrast, Robert Frost's "*Birches*" employs images of trees and their bending branches as a metaphor for the human condition of seeking escape and solace from life's difficulties. The poem explores the theme of memory and the retrospective lens through which we view our own past. Frost also uses imagery of swinging on the birch trees as a symbol of returning to childhood, a time of innocence and freedom from life's burdens and losses. Frost's use of natural imagery, free verse, and visual imagery creates a nostalgic and introspective tone, contrasting with the existential themes of loss and regret found in Dickens' poem.

Overall, while both writers address the themes of memory, loss, and regret, they do so in distinct and unique ways that display their respective styles and literary techniques. Dickens focuses on the grief of unrequited love and the memories shared with a lost loved one through vivid and concrete

imagery. In contrast, Frost explores the existential weight of loss and longing through metaphors and contemplative language.

Examples from both texts

In "*The Ivy Green*," Charles Dickens employs vivid and concrete imagery to represent memory, loss, and regret. For instance, the image of the ivy on the grave is used to symbolize the speaker's desire to keep the memory of his lost love alive. This is evident in the lines, "*The Ivy green, the Ivy green / Crawling where no life is seen / Footsteps heard along the green / Ivy, Ivy, crawling.*"

Moreover, Dickens uses repetition, rhyme, and syntax to create a melancholic tone that emphasizes the speaker's feelings of loss and regret. For example, note how the repetition of the phrase "*Ivy, Ivy*" creates a somber and plaintive effect, emphasizing the speaker's sorrow over the loss of his past love.

In Robert Frost's "*Birches*," the poet employs natural imagery, free verse, and visual imagery to explore the themes of memory, loss, and regret. For instance, the image of the birch trees and their bending branches is used to represent the human desire for escape and solace. Frost writes, "*When I see birches bend to left and right / Across the lines of straighter darker trees, / I like to think some boy's been swinging them.*"

Additionally, Frost uses metaphor and introspection to delve into themes of memory and the retrospective lens through which we view our own experiences. Frost writes, "*I'd like to get away from earth awhile / And then come back to it and begin over,*" conveying the speaker's nostalgic longing to return to the naiveté of childhood.

Overall, these examples show how Charles Dickens and Robert Frost employ different techniques and literary devices to explore the themes of memory, loss, and regret. While Dickens uses concrete imagery and repetition to emphasize the speaker's sorrow and longing, Frost employs natural imagery and introspective language to convey the human desire for escape and the bittersweet nature of memory.

Similarities and Differences in Both Poems' Theme of Memory, Loss and Regret

Although Charles Dickens' "*The Ivy Green*" and Robert Frost's "*Birches*" address common themes such as memory, loss, and regret, they do so in different ways, creating distinct representations.

One way in which the two poems differ is in their treatment of the theme of memory. In "*The Ivy Green*," Dickens presents memory as an active choice and responsibility to keep a loved one's memory alive. Conversely, Frost portrays memory as something more passive and fleeting, an attempt to revisit the past but always ending up back in the present. In this sense, "*The Ivy Green*" is more focused on the enduring nature of memory, while "*Birches*" emphasizes its shifting and elusive quality.

Furthermore, while both poems address the theme of loss, they approach this topic from different angles. In "*The Ivy Green*," Dickens focuses on the loss of a past love and a future that could have been, creating a poignant and regretful tone. In contrast, Frost's "*Birches*" emphasizes the inevitability of loss,

using the image of bending birch trees and the fading of snow to symbolize the transience of life. This creates a more contemplative and accepted tone to the representation of loss.

Overall, the two poems overlap in their exploration of themes of memory, loss, and regret, but they arrive at these themes through distinct perspectives and approaches. While "*The Ivy Green*" is more concrete in its representation of memory and loss, creating a sense of longing and sorrowful nostalgia, "*Birches*" focuses on the more elusive and transitory nature of memory, loss, and regret. The commonalities and points of departure between the two poems reveal the power of poetry to encapsulate complex human emotions from different perspectives.

Examples from both texts

In "*The Ivy Green*," Charles Dickens depicts memory as a deliberate choice and responsibility to keep a loved one's memory alive. This is evident in the lines, "*Oh, sorry thoughts! Oh, thoughts of tender years! / How many a vanished hope / Resigned this bosom, torn and seared.*" Here, the speaker takes an active role in preserving and reflecting upon memories of a past love, emphasizing their importance in shaping the present.

In contrast, Robert Frost's "*Birches*" portrays memory as more passive and fleeting. Frost writes, "*I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree, / And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk / Toward heaven...*" Here, memory is something that can be revisited, but always with a sense of loss and longing that comes with the realization that the past can never be fully recaptured.

Regarding the theme of loss, the two poems differ in their overall tone and approach. In "*The Ivy Green*," Dickens focuses on the loss of a past love and the regret that comes with not being able to experience a future that could have been. This is evident in the lines, "*But busied, sought, and underneath / The ivy leaves she hid her grief, / The grief she dared not show.*" The melancholic tone of this stanza highlights the speaker's sense of loss and sorrowful nostalgia.

On the other hand, Frost's "*Birches*" emphasizes the inevitability of loss and the transience of life. Frost writes, "*One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.*" The idea of swinging on the birch trees is a metaphor for escaping the burdens of everyday life and finding joy in the moment despite the inevitability of change and loss. The poem's contemplative tone embodies an emotional acceptance and appreciation of life's transience.

In short, while both "*The Ivy Green*" and "*Birches*" address themes of memory, loss, and regret, they do so from different perspectives and with distinct literary techniques. Dickens highlights the importance of actively preserving memories, while Frost portrays memory as more elusive and transient. Likewise, Dickens emphasizes the sorrowful aspects of loss, while Frost approaches it with a contemplative and accepting tone.

Literary Techniques Used in Both Poems

Both Charles Dickens and Robert Frost use a range of literary techniques to convey their themes of memory, loss, and regret in their respective poems. Some of the common techniques they employ are:

1. Imagery: Both Dickens and Frost use vivid and concrete imagery to bring their poems to life. In "*The Ivy Green*," Dickens uses the image of ivy on a grave to represent memory, while Frost uses imagery of trees and swinging to symbolize the human condition of seeking escape from life's difficulties.
2. Symbolism: Both poets use symbolism to represent abstract concepts or emotions. For instance, Frost uses the imagery of bending birch trees to symbolize the transience of life, while Dickens's ivy represents life persisting in death.
3. Metaphor: Metaphors are a common feature in both poems. Dickens uses the image of the ivy green to represent both memory and the idea of a lasting love, while Frost compares the experience of swinging on the birches to a momentary escape from the burdens of everyday life.
4. Tone: The tone of both poems plays an essential role in conveying the themes of loss, regret, and memory. In "*The Ivy Green*," the tone is melancholic and wistful, while the tone of "*Birches*" is contemplative and accepting, highlighting the bittersweet aspects of life.
5. Imaginative language: Dickens and Frost both use imaginative language that enhances their poems' themes and tones. Frost's use of metaphors such as "*life's hard goings*" or "*Earth's a right place for love*" and Dickens' use of personification of mother nature, for example, "*Old oak, you're lonely in your grove*," show their creative use of language to connect emotion to natural objects.

Overall, while the writing styles and techniques of Charles Dickens and Robert Frost differ, they both adeptly employ literary devices to convey the depths of human emotion relating to memory, loss, and regret.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research paper has explored how Charles Dickens and Robert Frost employ diverse literary techniques to convey themes of memory, loss, and regret in their respective poems, "*The Ivy Green*" and "*Birches*." Through an analysis of their use of imagery, symbolism, metaphor, tone, and imaginative language, we have gained insights into the complexity of human emotions and the diverse ways in which language can be used to express them. The researcher has found that Dickens and Frost's approaches to these themes differed markedly; with "*The Ivy Green*" conveying melancholic regret and a longing for the past while, "*Birches*" presents a bittersweet acceptance of life's hardships. By closely examining the poems' themes and stylistic choices, we have uncovered how each poet uses language to evoke and amplify particular emotional responses in the reader. Furthermore, this research article has emphasized the value of literary analysis in understanding the depth and significance of poetry. It has revealed how careful scrutiny of a poet's use of language and technique can yield a greater appreciation of the art of poetry, while also highlighting the role of literature in responding to universal human experiences that transcend time and place.

In finish, through a close reading of Dickens and Frost's poetry, this research paper has demonstrated the richness and diversity of poetic approaches to themes of memory, loss, and regret, while providing students of literature with a model for analyzing and interpreting poetic texts. By exploring the various ways in which literary techniques can be employed to express complex emotions, this research paper underscores the power of language and literature in enriching our understanding of the human experience.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Based on the findings of this research paper, there are some recommendations that can be made to further enhance our understanding of literary themes and techniques.

1. Engage in comparative analysis: Comparative analysis between different poems or authors using specific themes or literary techniques can reveal how these techniques vary across authors and texts, and how differences can create new conceptualizations of said themes. Comparative analysis can also elevate the interpretation of new reflective and critical perspectives on literary works, enriching research of English literature.
2. Contextualize works: To gain a complete understanding of authors' works or specific literary periods, it is recommended that we explore the socio-historical, cultural, and political contexts in which these works were produced. To understand Dickens' "The Ivy Green," for example, we might explore English cultural motifs of the time surrounding death, cemeteries, or family values.
3. Use literary techniques consciously: Writers, including poets, should use literary techniques consciously in their writing to create powerful and thought-provoking pieces of literature. Familiarizing oneself with techniques such as imagery, symbolism, metaphor, and tone can help writers to develop their own unique voices and literary styles, and increase their ability to produce emotional and impactful works.
4. Promote literary education: Literature can offer important insights into the human experience, and should henceforth be promoted as a crucial subject in the education system. Educators should emphasize the study of works relevant for each country, and train students on how to conduct textual analysis, theoretical approaches and their application, providing access to sources and resources for literary research and scholarship.

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Overall, the findings and recommendations of this research article highlight the importance of literary analysis and education as tools for developing critical thinking, creativity, and cultural appreciation.

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