



## ANALYSIS OF MEANING AND POETIC DEVICES IN THE POEM

### “THE SOLDIER” BY RUPERT BROOKE

Robby Satria<sup>1</sup>, Mhd Johan<sup>2</sup>, Ramanda Rizki<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Soshum, Universitas Putera Batam , Kepulauan Riau

<sup>2</sup>Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Soshum, Universitas Putera Batam , Kepulauan Riau

<sup>3</sup> Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, FKIP, Universitas Lancang Kuning , Riau

robmandala@gmail.com

#### ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menganalisis makna dan perangkat puisi “The Soldier” karya Rupert Brooke tentang pengorbanan tentara Inggris masa Perang Dunia I. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan menerapkan Pendekatan Formalistik berdasarkan teori LG Alexander. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui pembacaan mendalam (close reading) dan dianalisis menggunakan interpretasi unsur tematik dan struktural dari teks. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa puisi ini berfungsi terutama untuk mengenang pejuang perang sebagai bentuk pengorbanan mulia bagi tanah air. Puisi ini merepresentasikan bentuk patriotisme yang diromantisasi, khas dalam karya-karya sastra awal Perang Dunia I. Analisis mengidentifikasi penggunaan satu perangkat struktur (ilustrasi), satu perangkat makna (metafora), dan dua perangkat bunyi: rima (dengan delapan pola berbeda) dan ritme (dengan struktur enam suku kata yang konsisten). Seluruh perangkat tersebut secara kolektif memperkuat sajak puisi yang indah serta mencerminkan kehormatan, warisan, dan pengabdian terhadap bangsa.

**Kata kunci:** puisi, makna, perangkat puitis

#### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the meaning and poetic devices of the poem "The Soldier" by Rupert Brooke toward the sacrafaction of British soldier in World War I. This research uses a qualitative method by applying a Formalistic Approach based on LG Alexander's theory. Data collection techniques are carried out through close reading and analyzed using content analysis to interpret the thematic and structural elements of the text. The findings show that this poem functions primarily to commemorate the war hero as a form of noble sacrifice for the homeland. This poem represents a romanticized form of patriotism, typical of early World War I literary works. The analysis identifies the use of one structural device (illustration), one meaning device (metaphor), and two sound devices: rhyme (with eight different patterns) and rhythm (with a consistent structure of six syllables). All of these devices collectively enhance the poem's beautiful verse and reflection of honor, legacy, and national devotion.

**Keywords:** Poem, Meaning, Poetic Devices

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literary works are born from the imagination of an author. Literary work is a form of the author's play on words that contain a specific purpose, which will be conveyed to literary connoisseurs. Literary is a distinctive discourse which in its expression uses language by utilizing all available possibilities (Wainwright, 2004). Language is one of the most important elements in literary work. The role of literature as a balancer for essential human elements makes literary learning important given in the educational process because literary reading provides input on the value of life skills in society. Through literary learning, the community is expected to be able to reap the life experiences described by the author in literary discourse because basically literature is the result of reflection on the values of life.

The most prominent form of literary works from the use of language that gives rise to aesthetics is poetry. Poetry has its own characteristics in terms of language use. Poetry is an aesthetically meaningful work, which has meaning, not just something empty without meaning. Poetry in addition to having a message to be conveyed by the author, poetry is also composed using a distinctive language. The discussion of poetry will, of course, involve discussing a unique text that is different from other texts. In addition, poets use figurative language because they want to show the hidden language behind everyday language to perfect poetry. Poetry has complex sentences and also has more than one meaning, therefore researchers are interested in analyzing the meaning and devices in a poem. The poem that the writer chose is a poem by Rupert Brooke entitled "The Soldier".

"The soldier" is the fifth poem by Rupert Brooke's war sonnets. Brooke wrote the poem about the start of world war 1. Before the start of World War I, Rupert Brooke was a well-known poet who traveled, wrote, fell in love multiple times, joined the great literary movement, and,

when he volunteered for the Royal Navy Division, had recovered from a pre-war mental collapse. In addition to his retirement, he participated in combat during the 1914 Battle of Antwerp. He wrote a brief series of five war sonnets from 1914, concluding with the so-called Soldier, while waiting for a new revision. He was soon dispatched to the Dardanelles. He was a skilled recruiter and declined an opportunity to be relocated from the front of the line, but on April 23, 1915, he passed away from blood poisoning caused by a weak insect. Dysentery spoiled the bite. This poem makes extensive use of figurative language, which may lead people attempting to understand it astray. Therefore, the meaning and poetic form of the soldier's poem are of interest to scholars.

This study explores the meaning and tools of poetry to understand the meaning of poetry. This study analyzes the general meaning, the detailed meaning, and the meaning of the poem. This study is intended to describe the message that the author wants to convey broadly and specifically. Not only that, understanding the purpose of poetry is very important. Not only meaning, but the researchers also analyzed three poetic devices, namely: structural devices, sensory devices and sound devices. By recognizing these three tools, it will be easier for poets to understand how poets use words and sounds to achieve their goals. In addition, you will easily observe how the poet succeeds in evoking the desired sadness and helping the reader experience that sadness.

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a critical analysis of the poem *The Soldier* by Rupert Brooke. This poem has drawn significant interest due to its emotional depth and the subtle complexities of its language, which reflect a particular ideological stance on war and nationalism. Despite its initial surface-level simplicity, the poem's underlying themes and stylistic choices warrant closer

examination. The selection of this poem is also based on its refined and evocative use of language, which contributes to its enduring impact. Accordingly, the objective of this research is to explore the poem's meaning and to identify the literary devices employed to convey its themes.

### **Literature Review**

Poetry is "a literary work with a style of language that is condensed, shortened, and given a rhythm with a coherent sound and the choice of figurative or imaginative words" (Alexander, 1969) Poetry is a text or composition that expresses the poet's thoughts and feelings by prioritizing the beauty of words. Poetry is also defined as a composition in a language whose forms are carefully selected and arranged. Just like Rauf (2019) stated that This paper seeks to examine the formalistic aspects of William Blake's poem *A Poison Tree*. This study also wants to explore how the poem's form and content interact through the use of poetic devices, stylistic choices, and specific phrases to build and convey meaning

### **Meaning in Poetry**

A poem's message should be clear to readers once they have read it carefully (Chen, 2019). Poems might mean three different things. According to (Alexander, 1969) The broad meaning, which may be expressed succinctly in one or two phrases, is the type of meaning that can be inferred from reading the entire poem. Usually, but not always, a poem's title will give readers some insight into its subject matter. The second type of meaning is referred to as detailed meaning and must be described stanza by stanza. However, readers shouldn't attempt to sum up the poem or care about the definition of specific terms. The readers also must take great care to be accurate and to explain themselves in simple terms, even when the detailed meaning may be presented as a single

paragraph. The final type of meaning is referred to as **intention**. This pertains to the message or purpose the poet aims to convey through the poem. Ideally, the poet's intention should be accessible and resonate with the reader. However, appreciating this aspect can be challenging if the reader has not engaged with the poem attentively. Without careful analysis, the deeper implications and intended emotions behind the poet's words may remain obscured, limiting a full understanding of the work

### **Poetry Devices**

#### **a. Structure devices**

The typical tools used to form the poem's structure or body are known as structural devices. Then, there are three different categories for structural devices. The first is repetition, when certain words, phrases, or sentences are used repeatedly to emphasize a particular theme. The second technique is contrast, which is used when a poet juxtaposes two opposing ideas. The next step is illustration, which refers to providing readers with a clear visual to aid in understanding.

#### **b. Sense Devices**

The typical tools used to form the poem's structure or body are known as structural devices. Then, there are three different categories for structural devices. The first is repetition, when certain words, phrases, or sentences are used repeatedly to emphasize a particular theme. The second technique is contrast, which is used when a poet juxtaposes two opposing ideas. The next step is illustration, which refers to providing readers with a clear visual to aid in understanding.

### c. Sound Devices

All aspects of sound that were produced while the poem was being composed are related to sound equipment. There are various different types of sound devices. Alliteration is the first type, which happens when a sound is repeatedly used. Assonance is the second type, and it occurs when a poet utilizes an unsuitable rhyme. The third is rhyme, which is composed of words that have the same sound and often appears at the conclusion of lines in poetry. Onomatopoeia is the final type, where it emerges in words that imitate noises.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology this research presents for its data collection, analysis, and conclusion is appropriate and specific. The methodology of the research is based on the qualitative approach, which is suitable for discursive or descriptive research that goes beyond a strictly statistical report and incorporates a logical or engaging variable. This study applies a **formalistic approach** to analyze Rupert Brooke's poem *The Soldier*, focusing on its internal elements such as structure, diction, imagery, tone, and symbolism.

The analysis is guided by **L.G. Alexander's theory of poetry interpretation**, which offers a structured method for examining poetic language, including lexical choices, syntax, sound devices, and figurative expressions. The whole framework supports a close reading of the poem, allowing for detailed insight into how stylistic elements shape the emotional and thematic content.

Through this combined approach, the study explores how *The Soldier* constructs a romanticized vision of patriotic sacrifice. Attention is given to the sonnet form, use of iambic pentameter, and Brooke's idealized imagery of England to reveal how form and content reinforce the poem's nationalistic and spiritual messages. As an acceptable technique of data collection, the research uses a close reading of the data source from Rupert Brooke's poem *The soldier*. The data that is important to the methodological issues and research themes was communicated through the reading. Content analysis is then used to review the data once it has been collected. It is an analytical method that entails looking at the poem's poetic devices and meaning in order to draw a conclusion.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Poem Background

*If I should die, think only this of me:*

*That there's some corner of  
a foreign field*

*That is for ever England.  
There shall be*

*In that rich earth a richer dust  
concealed;*

*A dust whom England  
bore, shaped, made aware,*

*Gave, once, her flowers to  
love, her ways to roam,*

*A body of England's, breathing  
English air,*

*Washed by the rivers, blest  
by suns of home.*

*And think, this heart, all  
evil shed away,*

*A pulse in the eternal mind, no  
less*



*Gives somewhere back the  
thoughts by England given;  
Her sights and sounds;  
dreams happy as her day;  
And laughter, learnt of friends;  
and gentleness,  
In hearts at peace, under  
an English heaven.* (Brooke, 1914)

Rupert Brooke wrote the poem "The Soldier" in the first year of the First World War (1914). A poem that describes a soldier's love for his country in this case England, which is described as a kind of nurturing paradise in a very idealistic and patriotic way. The soldier's connection to England was so strong that he believed that it was the source of his life and the place where his thoughts would return after death. The poems, which captured early enthusiasm for war, became popular with the general public at the time (before the grim realities of long-term conflict made themselves known). Today, the poem is considered a bit naive and provides little insight into the realities of combat.

### 3.2 Poem Meaning

#### a. General Meaning

A soldier's poem that expresses a soldier's love for his homeland in this case England, seems to be a nurturing utopia. The soldier's connection to England was so strong that he believed that it was the source of his life and the place where his thoughts would return after death. The poems, which captured early enthusiasm for war, became popular with the general public at the time (before the grim realities of long-term conflict made themselves known). Today, the poem is considered a bit

naive and provides little insight into the realities of combat. Nonetheless, it undoubtedly captures and distills a certain kind of patriotism.

#### b. Detail meaning

*If I should die, think only this of  
me:*

*That there's some corner of  
a foreign field*

*That is for ever England.  
There shall be*

*In that rich earth a richer dust  
concealed;*

The poem's title suggests that, rather than representing a specific person, the speaker represents a larger category of people—the loyal soldier. The speaker is a form of archetype, an idealized representation of what a soldier should be.

The poem's first line sets the stage by insinuating that, for the reasons that will be discussed later, people do not need to mourn the death of the speaker. This is typical of the poem's style because sonnets frequently begin with a claim that the rest of the poem must support. In this way, they are like mini arguments. Line 2 introduces the logic supporting the statement that readers shouldn't be saddened by the speaker's passing.

The speaker's rationale is motivated by a strong sense of English nationalism in this poetry. He claims that if he passes away in a far-off "foreign field," his dead body will make that place a part of England as well. In other words, the Englishness will still be present in his physical remains. This sentence extends into the following

line due to the manner that line 2 encamps into line 3, with the last word being far from the beginning to mimic the soldier's personal trips to faraway countries. Along with this, the caesura in line 3 after "England" creates a strong pause that makes the reader realize the importance of the soldier's country of origin.

The poem uses its first metaphor after that caesura, yet it is also based in truth. The speaker contrasts his own body with the soil of the earth while picturing the scene of his impending death. The speaker's death will benefit the land where he passes away because it will imbue it with that same Englishness because the speaker is fundamentally an element of England. The diacope (also known as polyptoton) in line 4 between "rich" and "richer" emphasizes England and Englishness as a kind of rare and precious substance. This is described as a type of wealth.

*A dust whom England bore,  
shaped, made aware,*

*Gave, once, her flowers to  
love, her ways to roam,*

*A body of England's, breathing  
English air,*

*Washed by the rivers, blest  
by suns of home.*

Humans learn more about that "dust" from speakers. The English "allowed it", "formed it", and "made it aware". In addition, the British gave him access to "flowers to love" and allowed him to "roam" his way. In this case, the British basically took on the role of the mother of the army. (Something to think about later: why is there so much emphasis on

country-as-parents rather than on "real" mothers?). The second line here can be paraphrased as follows: "England once gave this dust its flowers to love and gave it a way to roam." But how do you gift dust? Remember that this dust still refers to The Soldier (check the title). However, the word "dust" is very interesting. On the one hand, it alludes to the ground and emphasizes how English the soldier is. He is part of the dust of the earth. On the other hand, the term "dust" is used to refer to corpses or even cremated remains. The speaker seemed to be talking about corpses now rather than real people.

The speaker reminds us that this dust was a "body of England's" that someone truly enjoyed everything England has to offer, including the air, rivers, sun, and everything else. Given that it's in the present tense, "breathing English air" is weird. Even if he is dead, is the soldier still breathing? Does he pass away and keep believing he is breathing it? Or is the phrase "breathing English air" merely a metaphor for the soldier's ethnicity? You know how some people say that they [insert their favorite activity, such as football or model trains] live, eat, and breathe? He breathes English, that's how English he is!

*And think, this heart, all evil shed  
away,*

*A pulse in the eternal mind, no  
less*

*Gives somewhere back the  
thoughts by England given;*

The poem's ninth line, which marks the start of the sestet, is now within our reach. (The last

six lines of a sonnet is called a "sestet"; the first eight are the "octave." For more on this, head on over to "Form and Meter.") Typically, a sonnet begins to change direction or provide a solution to the issues raised in the octave at this time. Once more facing his addressee, the speaker begs for him to "think" (consider, we might say these days) that the soldier's heart "shed away" all the bad stuff of life.

Let's give it some thought, then. Most likely, the "everlasting mind" alludes to a concept similar to that of God. The speaker appears to be claiming that when the soldier enters heaven, he will merge with that greater, eternal person and possibly relive all the thoughts "by Britain supplied" in the form of a "pulse."

This most likely indicates that after he passes away, he will once again experience what he previously knew about England and home. He thus has that working in his favor.

"Gives back," says the speaker. Does this imply that his thoughts were removed? He likely means that he won't be thinking or conscious for a period of time between dying and entering paradise, but that he'll regain consciousness once he arrives at the Big Man's home.

*Her sights and sounds; dreams  
happy as her day;*

*And laughter, learnt of friends;  
and gentleness,*

*In hearts at peace, under  
an English heaven.*

When someone gets there, what will be there? The sights, sounds, and dreams the soldier experienced in the earthly form of

England are present in the "eternal mind," so to speak. Additionally, the soldier will chuckle since they "learned of buddies." And cake! The speaker portrays a very happy, serene picture of life after death, one that will be very similar to his happiest times spent in England. Oh wait In any case.

It sounds like a lot of fun here. Those who enter this "English heaven" will also possess "gentleness" in their hearts. Why wouldn't there be, then? Their hearts are "at peace." However, the notion of an English heaven is intriguing. Will you require a passport? Perhaps there are various heavens for various people, and the soldier in this poem will enter an English heaven as opposed to a German or French paradise. In any case, we are confident that his afterlife will be full of the cozy comforts of home. Salute to him!

### **c. Intention**

Soldier poetry expresses a soldier's love for his home country, in this example England, which seems to be a caring utopia. The soldier had such a strong connection with England that he thought that was the origin of his life and the place where his consciousness would go after death. The poem gained popularity among the general public at the time because it represented an early enthusiasm for war (before the grim realities of long-term conflict became known). The poem looks a bit naive and offers little insight into the realities of today's battles. Nonetheless, he unhesitatingly captures and distills a certain kind of patriotism.

### 3.3 Poetic Devices

#### a. Structure Devices

##### Illustration

***If I should die, think only this of me:***

*That there's some corner of  
a foreign field*

*That is for ever England.  
There shall be*

*In that rich earth a richer dust  
concealed;*

The first stanza "if I should die, think only this me" the author describes that he will die in that war. And he wants to always be remembered with certain things. That's an illustration that depicts a war filled with blood and soldiers must be remembered.

#### b. Sense Devices

##### Metaphor

*In that rich earth a richer **dust**  
**concealed;***

In line 4 The speaker imagines himself as a part of nature, a pieces of "dust concealed" in the earth. The speaker's status as a corpse and his link to the natural world are both represented by dust in this passage.

#### c. Sound Devices

##### Rhyme

The soldier is a poem that has a regular scheme. The poem has a different sonata, in which the soldier uses the rhyme scheme (Shakespeare) in octaves and the scheme (petrarchan) is tuned.

#### The octave is rhymed:

ABABCD CD

Octave is also known as octava or stanza. Eight-strand rhymes and poems in which each stanza consists of eight lines

***If I should die, think only this of me; A***

*That there's some corner of  
a foreign **field B***

*That is for ever England.  
There shall **be A***

*In that rich earth a richer dust  
**concealed; B***

*A dust whom England  
bore, shaped, made **aware, C***

*Gave, once, her flowers to  
love, her ways to **roam, D***

*A body of England's, breathing  
English **air, C***

*Washed by the rivers, blest  
by suns of **home. D***

#### The sestet is rhymed:

*And think, this heart, all  
evil shed **away, A***

*A pulse in the eternal mind, no  
**less B***

*Gives somewhere back the  
thoughts by England **given; C***

*Her sights and sounds;  
dreams happy as her **day; A***

*And laughter, learnt of friends;  
and **gentleness, B***

*In hearts at peace, under  
an English **heaven. C***

Sestet or can also be called sextet. A six-strand rhyme or poem in which each stanza consists of six stanzas.



#### 4. CONCLUSION

Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier" is one of remarkable poem in early twentieth century, portraying the life of England soldiers in World War Era. Considering all the wonderful gifts his cherished country has provided and how she has influenced his identity, the poet believes that only his blood would be a fitting tribute to offer. The soldier in the poem looks for atonement by offering a sacrifice to protect the country. The poem "The Soldier" explores the meaning in relationship between a devoted British soldier and his nation. The poem indicates that individuals are influenced by their surroundings and cultures and that their homeland is worthy of being protected at all costs, as shown by the soldier's heartfelt depiction of his bond with England. It highlighted the courage exhibited by fighters while glorifying the accomplishments of humans. The Soldiers always employs this pattern. Lasty as the intention, it pertains to the heart, united with infinity and devoid of bias and animosity. It will persist, relishing the beautiful memories given to him by the English countryside. Therefore, the beauty and importance of the sonnet come from a pre-established feeling of unity with England. After analyzing the whole poem, meaning and devices can be identified. There are there meaning found in the poem, namely general meaning, detail meaning and intention. It has some devices too, like illustration in structural devices, Metaphors in sense devices and Rhyme as sound devices.

#### References

Alexander, L. G. (1969). *Poetry and Prose appreciation for overseas students*. Longmans.

Brooke, Rupert. *The Soldier. 1914 and Other Poems*, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1915.

Brooks, Cleanth, and Robert Penn Warren. *Understanding Poetry*. 3rd ed., Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960.

Chen, G. (2019). *A Literature Review on Prose Study*. 378(Icelandic), 512–516.

H. Bloom, (2003) *Poets of World War I: Rupert Brooke & Siegfried Sassoon*, Chelsea House

P. Hühn, (2016) "Rupert Brooke: 'The Soldier' (1914) and Wilfred Owen: 'Strange meeting'" in *Facing Loss and Death*, De Gruyter, 2016,

Rauf, U., Rauf, M., Rauf, S., & Rauf, R. (2025). *Formalistic analysis of 'A Poison Tree' by William Blake*. *Journal for Social Science Archives*, 3(1), 1104–1110. <https://doi.org/10.59075/jssa.v3i1.192>

Satria, R. (2021). *Diktat English Poetry*. Batam: Universitas Putera Batam.

Wainwright, J. (2004). *Poetry: The Basic*. Routledge.

Wellek, René, and Austin Warren. *Theory of Literature*. Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1949.