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**S. No 1 B.A.Part-1 English (Hons.) Topic: *Pastoral Elegy* Dr Umesh Prasad Singh, Assistant Prof of English, D. B. College Contact No 7250460920, Email-ID [drumeshsingh131@gmail.com](mailto:drumeshsingh131@gmail.com)**

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## What is Pastoral Elegy?

The **pastoral elegy** is a special kind of elegy. The words 'pastoral' comes from the Greek word "pastor", which means "to graze". Hence pastoral elegy is an elegy in which the poet represents himself as a shepherd mourning the death of a fellow shepherd. The form arose among the ancient Greeks, and Theocritus, Bion and Moschus were its most noted practitioners. In ancient Rome, it was used by the Latin poet Virgil. In England, countless pastoral elegies have been written down from the Renaissance (16<sup>th</sup> century) to the present day.

## Examples of Pastoral Elegy:

Spenser's *Astrophel*, Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelley's *Adonais* and Arnold's *Thyrsis* and *Scholar Gipsy*, are the most notable examples of pastoral elegy. The pastoral elegy is a work of art, following a particular convention, and using particular imagery drawn from rural life and rural scenery. Hence it is lacking in that sincerity which should be a marked feature of a poem of personal lament. Hence it was that Dr. Johnson condemned the form as artificial and unnatural and said, "Where there is leisure for fiction, there is little grief."

Elegies continue to be written in the 20 century, elegies in which the poets pour out their anxieties, frustrations, and despairs. Their number is so large that even their names cannot be mentioned in the short space at our disposal. But one thing is to be noted. The modern poet is unconventional in his use of the elegiac form, as in other matters.

For example, W.H. Auden reverses the elegiac tradition in this elegies, particularly in his well-known elegy on W.B. Yeats. Traditionally in an elegy, all nature is represented as mourning the death, here nature is represented as going on its course,

indifferent and unaffected by the death of Yeats. The great poet's death goes unnoticed both by man and nature; human life goes on as usual, and so does nature. Secondly, in the traditional elegy, the dead is glorified and his death is said to be a great loss for mankind at large but Auden does not glorify Yeats. He goes to the extent of calling him 'Silly' and further that his poetry could make nothing happen "Ireland has her madness and her weather still." Thus Auden reverses the traditional elegiac values and treats them ironically. Dylan Thomas is another such unconventional writer of elegies.