

The Eagle

Alfred Lord Tennyson

*He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands*

*The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.*

Paraphrase:

This poem is dedicated to the beauty of the eagle. It is a two-stanza poem.

The poet describes the eagle and its greatness. It had the ability to fly very high in the sky. It can face all the dangers of the world.

In the second stanza, the eagle is shown as more important than the sea. It is very fast and when it sees its prey, it falls to get it like a thunderbolt. It is a very beautiful and terrifying bird.

Analysis:

The poet personifies the eagle in an extended personification throughout the poem. He refers to it using the pronoun "he" as if it were a man. It also has "hands". This implies its greatness. We have to respect it as it stands in the face of dangers.

There is a metaphor in "the wrinkled sea beneath him crawls", in which the sea is compared to an animal that crawls. It stresses the greatness and the high speed of the eagle compared to the sea.

There is a personification in “the wrinkled sea”. The sea is compared to an old man. It stresses the youth and strength of the eagle compared to the sea.

There is a personification in “He watches”, in which he compares the eagle to a man who watches. It shows its greatness.

There is a simile in the last line. The eagle is compared to a thunderbolt. It also shows its high speed when getting at its prey.

There is an inversion in “Ringed with the azure world, he stands”. It shows the eagle’s ability to face dangers bravely.

There is a metaphor in “mountain walls” which shows that the mountain is like his house. The world seems as if it is made for him.

Diction:

The word “clasps” shows its severity. It is a bird of prey.

The phrase “lonely lands” is better than the word “desert” because they imply that it is the only great thing in the desert.

The phrase “he stands” has a double meaning. It shows its greatness when it faces dangers and, at the same time, it shows that the eagle is a part of nature.

There is a contrast between the high surroundings of the first stanza and the low surroundings in the second one. This shows the greatness of the eagle. The word “falls” shows how fast the eagle is.

The poem is very brief but it is also very musical as it has a regular rhyme scheme: (a, a, a, b, b, b). There is an alliteration in (lonely lands) as well as (clasps the crag and crooked). There is assonance in (clasps, crag / watches, walls). These devices make internal music and show the power of the eagle.