

جامعة تكريت
كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية
قسم اللغة الانكليزية



المرحلة: الثانية

Subject Name: Intoduction to liteature

Lecture: "Break, Break, Break" by Alfred Tennyson

Full name: Dr. Dheyaa R. Alwan

2025-2026

Fourth lecture

"Break, Break, Break" by Alfred Tennyson

Introduction

Good morning, dear students. Today, we will discuss a famous poem called "Break, Break, Break" by Alfred Tennyson. This poem is one of the most touching and emotional pieces in English literature. It talks about grief, nature, and the power of memory. In this lecture, we will explore the poem's meaning, themes, and literary devices in a simple and clear way.

1 .Background on Alfred Tennyson

Before we start, let's learn about the poet.

Alfred Tennyson (1809–1892) was one of the greatest poets of the Victorian era.

He became Poet Laureate, a title given to the best poet in England.

Many of his poems talk about love, loss, and the beauty of nature.

"Break, Break, Break" was written after Tennyson lost his close friend, Arthur Hallam.

2 .The Poem: "Break, Break, Break"

Let's look at the title. The word "break" is repeated three times. This repetition shows strong emotion and a deep sense of sadness.

The poem is about the poet standing near the sea, watching the waves crash on the shore. He is thinking about his lost friend and how life feels empty without him.

3 .Themes in the Poem

1 .Grief and Loss: The poet feels deep sadness after losing his friend. The breaking waves remind him of his broken heart.

2 .Nature's Power: The sea is strong and endless, while human life is short and fragile.

3 .Memory and Time: The poet remembers happy times with his friend, but those moments are now gone.

4 .The Poem's Structure

The poem has four stanzas, each with four lines.

The rhyme scheme is ABCB, which gives the poem a musical flow.

The lines are short and simple, making the poem easy to read and emotional.

Here is the first stanza:

<Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

5 .Literary Devices in the Poem

Tennyson uses many literary devices to make his poem powerful. Let's look at some examples:

1 .Repetition

The word “break” is repeated three times in the title and the first line. This repetition shows the sound of the waves and the poet's overwhelming grief.

2 .Imagery

The poet creates pictures in our minds using words like “cold gray stones” and “O Sea”.

This imagery helps us feel the coldness and sadness in the poem.

3 .Personification

The poet talks to the sea as if it were a person: “On thy cold gray stones, O Sea”!

This makes the sea seem alive and powerful.

4 .Contrast

The poem contrasts nature's strength with the poet's weakness. The sea is endless, but human life is short and full of pain.

5 .Alliteration

In the line "But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand," the repeated "t" sound makes the line soft and emotional.

6 .Analysis of the Stanzas

Let's break down the stanzas to understand the poem better:

Stanza 1:

The poet watches the waves and feels unable to express his emotions. He is overwhelmed by his grief.

Stanza 2:

He describes children playing and fishermen working. These images show that life goes on, even though he feels stuck in sadness.

Stanza 3:

The poet remembers his friend and wishes he could see him again. This stanza is full of longing and pain.

Stanza 4:

The waves continue to break on the shore, showing that nature is eternal, but human life is not. The poet feels the contrast between the endless sea and his own loss.

7 .Why is the Poem Important?

Emotional Depth: The poem captures universal feelings of grief and longing.

Simple Language: It is easy to read, but it has deep meaning.

Connection with Nature: The poem shows how nature reflects our emotions.

8 .Discussion Questions

1 .Why does the poet repeat the word “break” in the poem?

2 .How does the sea symbolize the poet’s emotions?

3. What do you think the poet misses most about his friend?