

**UNIT 2 Expressing a National Spirit**  
**American Renaissance 1800 to 1850**

A STEMM SCHOOL  
**FROEBEL**  
BILINGUAL SCHOOL  
Home of the Space Generation

WITH  
**JIM SOTO**

**THANATOPSIS**



# SPEAK YOUR MIND

Death. What are your thoughts about it?

Have your ideas or could your ideas about death change with time? How so?

Take a minute to consider and answer the question.



# ON THE SUBJECT OF DEATH

Death, like Life, has been the subject of Humanity's attention since the dawn of time. Is it the great enemy of Humanity? Or, is it a recompense for the tired and weary?

We think about it... or not.

We see it around us... or chose to ignore it.

We worry about it... or pretend we don't.

And we all have different ideas about it.

We look at it through particular lenses. Romanticism is going to be the one used in *Thanatopsis* or this "meditation on Death."



Many people in the romantic era believed that man should become one with nature. They felt power and wisdom comes from nature. They also believed in humanism, which elevated common man. Intuition was said to be more important than reason. People stressed the idea of following instincts. "Thanatopsis" is a good example of romantic literature by displaying the elements of man becoming one with nature and humanism ideals.

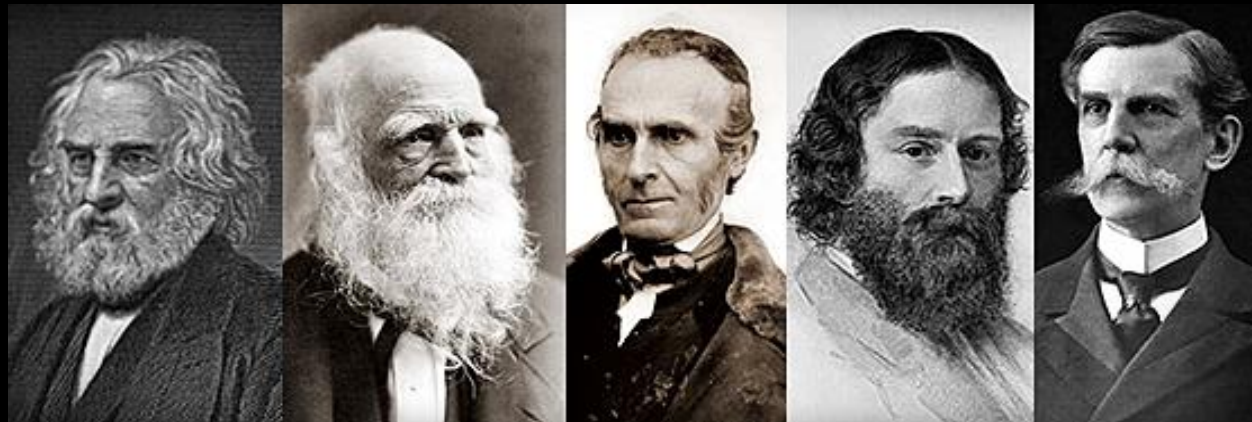
First of all, the poem shows several examples of how man should become one with nature... even in death.



# A FIRE-SIDE POET

The beauty of “Thanatopsis” language and the grandeur of its images immediately established William Cullen Bryant’s literary reputation and helped create pride in the ability of American writers to equal the literary creations of the British Romantic poets.

He was one of the **Fireside Poets**, a group of 19th-century American Romantic poets, mostly from New England. They were called so because their poems were typically read around a fire for the family to enjoy.



# LITERARY ELEMENTS

## Blank Verse

Blank verse is unrhymed poetry written in iambic pentameter. An **iambic pentameter** line consists of five metric units, or feet, with two syllables each. The first is weakly stressed, and the second is strongly stressed.

## Elaboration

Refers to a writing technique in which a subject is introduced and then expanded on through repetition with minor changes, the addition of details, or similar methods.





# APPLY READING SKILL

## Paraphrase

Paraphrasing, or rewriting passages in one's own words, helps students by reinforcing their understanding of a literary work. Remind students that when they paraphrase, they should change the words and sentence structure as appropriate but retain the ideas of the original.

# ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 89-94 in your book, complete the following activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE
  - **Blank Verse and Elaboration** - How does the steady rhythm of iambic pentameter, which characterizes blank verse, contribute to the effect of the poem? How might the poem be different if it had a different type of rhythm or no rhythm?
  - What might have been the speaker's reason for using elaboration, as shown by the number of long lists in the poem? Other than being shorter, how would the poem be different without the lists?



# THANATOPSIS

Let's hear a reading of the poem by Th. E. Boyd...





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