

Name _____ Date _____

British Literature

Response and analysis to "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard"

I. Read and annotate the author's biography

II. Read and annotate the poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard"

by:

- Summarizing each stanza in your own words
- Circling unfamiliar words
- Demonstrating your thought process as you read.

III. Respond to the following questions following response to literature guidelines that include answering in complete statements, and including quotes and examples from the poem to support your answers.

1. What do you think prompts the speaker to start thinking about his own death? For the first twenty or so stanzas, he's cheerfully thinking about the dead villagers. What shifts, and why?
2. Why do you think Gray uses so much personification? Why, for example, does he say "Let not Ambition mock their useful toil" in line 29, instead of, "Hey, ambitious people, don't make fun of these guys"? What's the effect on your reading?
3. In his Preface to Lyrical Ballads (which you can access [here](#)), William Wordsworth famously used Thomas Gray as an example of what poets should not do. He said that Gray used too much of what he called "unnatural" language—too many metaphors, too many personifications. Wordsworth argued that regular people didn't really talk like that, so poets shouldn't, either. Do you agree with Wordsworth? Why or why not? See if you can use examples from the poem to explain your answer.
4. Who do you think is the intended audience of this poem? Men, women? Rich people, poor people? Young or old? Why do you think so?
5. If this is an "Elegy," or a poem of mourning, who or what is it mourning? How do you know?
6. Why do you think Gray insisted so much on the fact that it's a country churchyard? Would the poem be different if it were set in a city? How so?

Extended Response:

What do you imagine people will say about you after you're dead? What would you like them to say? If you could write your own epitaph, as Gray does in this poem, what would it say?

Grading Rubric

Responses are complete and include the question as a statement _____/5

Responses clearly indicate that you understood the selection _____/10

Quotes and or/examples from the text are used to support your answers ____/5

Grammar and spelling are correct, with few or minimal errors _____/5

Extended response is thorough and demonstrates thoughtful insight____/5

Total: _____/25