

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Epitaph



# William Butler Yeats

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, many famous writers composed their own epitaphs. Some chose to have lines from their own work inscribed on their tombstones. The lines below are on the tombstone of the poet William Butler Yeats.

"Cast a cold Eye  
On Life, on Death.  
Horseman, pass by!"

One of the purposes of an epitaph is to leave a message for those who are still living. What do you think Yeats hoped to communicate to posterity by choosing these lines for his epitaph?

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Find out what poem these lines are from. Read the poem. Does reading the lines in this context change your thoughts about Yeats' epitaph? Why or why not? If so, how?

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