

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_



THIS PACKET WAS CREATED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THOMPSON'S ENGLISH CLASSES. ANY UNAUTHORIZED USE OR REDISTRIBUTION WILL RESULT IN A VISIT TO THE SPOON RIVER CEMETERY.

**ep·i·taph** (*noun*)

Etymology: Middle English *epitaphe*, from Middle French & Medieval Latin; Middle French, from Medieval Latin *epitaphium*, from Latin, funeral oration, from Greek *epitaphion*, from *epi-* + *taphos* tomb

**1** : an inscription on or at a tomb or a grave in memory of the one buried there

**2** : a brief statement commemorating or epitomizing a deceased person or something past

**Poetry Terms\***  
*Vocabulary Needed to Analyze (i.e., “Torture a Confession Out of”) a Poem*

**Narrator:** the person or “voice” telling the story or relating the description; the “speaker”

**Point of view:** the perspective from which the poem is presented

- **First person:** The speaker is a character in the poem and tells it from his/her own point of view.
- **Third person:** The speaker is not a character in the poem and tells of other characters or events from a separate (or omniscient) point of view.

**Tone:** the author’s (or narrator’s) feelings about the subject matter

**Mood:** the feeling the poem creates in the reader

**Imagery:** description that appeals to any of the five senses

**Figurative Language:** language that uses comparisons and non-literal meanings

- **Simile:** comparison that uses a specific word of comparison: *like, as, than*
- **Metaphor:** a comparison in which one thing is said to be another thing
- **Extended Metaphor:** a comparison that is carried throughout the poem as a unifying element
- **Personification:** a metaphor in which a non-human thing is given human characteristics
- **Symbol:** a thing that represents or suggests something besides or beyond itself
- **Irony:** incongruity between expectation and outcome
  - **Verbal:** words that suggest the opposite of their literal meaning (e.g., sarcasm)
  - **Situational:** when the opposite of what is expected happens
  - **Dramatic:** when the audience (reader, listener, viewer) knows something a character in work doesn’t know
- **Allusion:** implied or indirect reference (to an historical event or character, a work of art or literature, or anything supposed to be generally understood)

**Poetic Devices**

- **Alliteration:** repetition of initial consonant sounds
- **Assonance:** repetition of vowel sounds in lines of poetry
- **Repetition:** words, phrases, or ideas in a poem that are repeated
  - **Refrain:** a regularly recurring phrase or verse in a poem
- **Parallel Structure:** phrases or lines of similar construction found at various points in a poem
- **Rhyme:** two or more lines of poetry that have the same ending sounds
- **Rhetorical Question:** a question that does not require an answer; the effect is achieved just by asking the question
- **Analogy:** illustrating one idea through a more well-known idea, which has similarities to the first

**Stanza:** a group of lines in poetry that appear together, separated from other lines

**Free Verse:** poetry with no regular meter, rhyme, or line length

**Cross-reference:** a reference made in one literary work to an element that appears in another literary work. (Poems in *Spoon River Anthology*, for example, cross-reference each other.)

**Theme:** A general statement about life that is illustrated by a poem or story

- not a moral
- not a piece of advice or a warning
- not an expression of right/wrong, good/bad
- must be stated as a complete sentence

\*Hey, did you notice that many of these terms apply to ALL literature (stories, plays, novels, etc.), not just poetry?

**Spoon River Anthology by Edgar Lee Masters**

*Spoon River Anthology* is a mash-up of poetry, drama, and fiction. Masters presents a series of first-person monologues as they appear on the gravestones in a Midwestern cemetery in the early 1900s. The characters "speak" their own poetic epitaphs from beyond the grave, confessing the true motivations of their lives and uncovering many of the mysteries and secrets of the town. The following epitaphs appear in the introductory film. On the line under each epitaph, write the adjective pair that corresponds to the speaker's tone and circle the textual evidence that indicates it.

**Humble & Honored**  
**Arrogant & Disappointed**  
**Reflective & Melancholy**  
**Proud & Grateful**  
**Misunderstood & Sad**  
**Professional & Secretive**  
**Unrecognized & Patriotic**  
**Regretful & Ignorant**

\* \* \* \* \*

**Elsa Wertman**

I was a peasant girl from Germany,  
 Blue-eyed, rosy, happy and strong.  
 And the first place I worked was at Thomas Greene's.  
 On a summer's day when she was away  
 He stole into the kitchen and took me  
 Right in his arms and kissed me on my throat,  
 I turning my head. Then neither of us  
 Seemed to know what happened.  
 And I cried for what would become of me.  
 And cried and cried as my secret began to show.  
 One day Mrs. Greene said she understood,  
 And would make no trouble for me,  
 And, being childless, would adopt it.  
 (He had given her a farm to be still. )  
 So she hid in the house and sent out rumors,  
 As if it were going to happen to her.  
 And all went well and the child was born --They were so kind to me.  
 Later I married Gus Wertman, and years passed.  
 But -- at political rallies when sitters-by thought I was crying  
 At the eloquence of Hamilton Greene --  
 That was not it.  
 No! I wanted to say:  
 That's my son!  
 That's my son!

**Hamilton Green**

I was the only child of Frances Harris of Virginia  
 And Thomas Greene of Kentucky,  
 Of valiant and honorable blood both.  
 To them I owe all that I became,  
 Judge, member of Congress, leader in the State.  
 From my mother I inherited  
 Vivacity, fancy, language;  
 From my father will, judgment, logic.  
 All honor to them  
 For what service I was to the people!

**Richard Bone**

When I first came to Spoon River  
 I did not know whether what they told me  
 Was true or false.  
 They would bring me an epitaph  
 And stand around the shop while I worked  
 And say "He was so kind," "He was wonderful,"  
 "She was the sweetest woman," "He was a consistent Christian."  
 And I chiseled for them whatever they wished,  
 All in ignorance of its truth.  
 But later, as I lived among the people here,  
 I knew how near to the life  
 Were the epitaphs that were ordered for them when they died.  
 But still I chiseled whatever they paid me to chisel  
 And made myself party to the false chronicles  
 Of the stones,  
 Even as the historian does who writes  
 Without knowing the truth,  
 Or because he is influenced to hide it.

**Rutherford McDowell**

They brought me ambrotypes  
 Of the old pioneers to enlarge.  
 And sometimes one sat for me  
 Some one who was in being --  
 When giant hands from the womb of the world  
 Tore the republic.  
 What was it in their eyes? --  
 For I could never fathom  
 That mystical pathos of drooped eyelids,  
 And the serene sorrow of their eyes.  
 It was like a pool of water,  
 Amid oak trees at the edge of a forest,  
 Where the leaves fall,  
 As you hear the crow of a cock  
 From a far-off farm house, seen near the hills  
 Where the third generation lives, and the strong men  
 And the strong women are gone and forgotten.  
 And these grand-children and great grand-children  
 Of the pioneers!  
 Truly did my camera record their faces, too,  
 With so much of the old strength gone,  
 And the old faith gone,  
 And the old mastery of life gone,  
 And the old courage gone,  
 Which labors and loves and suffers and sings  
 Under the sun!

**Hortense Robbins**

My name used to be in the papers daily  
As having dined somewhere,  
Or traveled somewhere,  
Or rented a house in Paris,  
Where I entertained the nobility.  
I was forever eating or traveling,  
Or taking the cure at Baden-Baden.  
Now I am here to do honor  
To Spoon River, here beside the family whence I sprang.  
No one cares now where I dined,  
Or lived, or whom I entertained,  
Or how often I took the cure at Baden-Baden!

**Anne Rutledge**

Out of me unworthy and unknown  
The vibrations of deathless music;  
"With malice toward none, with charity for all."  
Out of me the forgiveness of millions toward millions,  
And the beneficent face of a nation  
Shining with justice and truth.  
I am Anne Rutledge who sleep beneath these weeds,  
Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln,  
Wedded to him, not through union,  
But through separation.  
Bloom forever, O Republic,  
From the dust of my bosom!

**Hannah Armstrong**

I wrote him a letter asking him for old times, sake  
To discharge my sick boy from the army;  
But maybe he couldn't read it.  
Then I went to town and had James Garber,  
Who wrote beautifully, write him a letter.  
But maybe that was lost in the mails.  
So I traveled all the way to Washington.  
I was more than an hour finding the White House.  
And when I found it they turned me away,  
Hiding their smiles.  
Then I thought: "Oh, well, he ain't the same as when I boarded him  
And he and my husband worked together  
And all of us called him Abe, there in Menard."  
As a last attempt I turned to a guard and said:  
"Please say it's old Aunt Hannah Armstrong  
From Illinois, come to see him about her sick boy  
In the army."  
Well, just in a moment they let me in!  
And when he saw me he broke in a laugh,  
And dropped his business as president,  
And wrote in his own hand Doug's discharge,  
Talking the while of the early days,  
And telling stories.

**Knowlt Hoheimer**

I was the first fruits of the battle of Missionary Ridge.  
When I felt the bullet enter my heart  
I wished I had staid at home and gone to jail  
For stealing the hogs of Curl Trenary,  
Instead of running away and joining the army.  
Rather a thousand times the county jail  
Than to lie under this marble figure with wings,  
And this granite pedestal  
Bearing the words, "Pro Patria."  
What do they mean, anyway?

On the line under each epitaph, write the adjective pair that corresponds to the speaker's tone and circle the textual evidence that indicates it.

- Humble & Honored**
- Arrogant & Disappointed**
- Reflective & Melancholy**
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**Assignment**

***ON A SEPARATE PAPER*, write a R.A.C.E. response to this question: **What is the difference between TONE and MOOD? Explain your answer using one of the epitaphs.****

**Restate the question as part of your answer.** [*The difference between tone and mood is....*] **Answer the question with a clear claim.** [*...tone is how the speaker of the text feels, but mood is how the text makes the reader feel.*] **Cite textual evidence, including the speaker's name and appropriate quotations from the epitaph.** [*In his epitaph, George Gray says, "I have studied many times...."*] **Explain how the textual evidence supports and illustrates your answer.** [*From this word choice, the reader can infer that George feels regretful because he did not take more risks in his life....*]

**Your finished response should be one coherent paragraph that is at least ¾ of a page in length. Staple it to this page and turn it in.**

**Epitaph Cycle: The Rhodes Affair**  
**Spoon River Anthology by Edgar Lee Masters**

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**1 : an inscription on or at a tomb or a grave in memory of the one buried there**

**2 : a brief statement commemorating or epitomizing a deceased person or something past**

*Spoon River Anthology* is a mash-up of poetry, drama, and fiction. Masters presents a series of first-person monologues as they appear on the gravestones in a Midwestern cemetery in the early 1900s. The characters “speak” their own poetic epitaphs from beyond the grave, confessing the true motivations of their lives and uncovering many of the mysteries and secrets of the town. The voices of the former residents of Spoon River often appear in clusters that present all sides of a story that would be incomplete if presented by only a single voice. Each epitaph may be appreciated for its own poetic merits, but by cross-referencing them with each other, the careful reader learns elements of the underlying (*get it?*) narrative that even the characters themselves do not understand. Here are eight epitaphs from the text that illustrate this:

**Eugene Carman**

RHODES, slave! Selling shoes and gingham,  
Flour and bacon, overalls, clothing, all day long  
For fourteen hours a day for three hundred and thirteen days  
For more than twenty years.  
Saying "Yes'm" and "Yes, sir", and "Thank you"  
A thousand times a day, and all for fifty dollars a month.  
Living in this stinking room in the rattle-trap "Commercial."  
And compelled to go to Sunday School, and to listen  
To the Rev. Abner Peet one hundred and four times a year  
For more than an hour at a time,  
Because Thomas Rhodes ran the church  
As well as the store and the bank.  
So while I was tying my neck-tie that morning  
I suddenly saw myself in the glass:  
My hair all gray, my face like a sodden pie.  
So I cursed and cursed: You damned old thing  
You cowardly dog! You rotten pauper!  
You Rhodes' slave! Till Roger Baughman  
Thought I was having a fight with some one,  
And looked through the transom just in time  
To see me fall on the floor in a heap  
From a broken vein in my head.

**Clarence Fawcett**

THE sudden death of Eugene Carman  
Put me in line to be promoted to fifty dollars a month,  
And I told my wife and children that night.  
But it didn't come, and so I thought  
Old Rhodes suspected me of stealing  
The blankets I took and sold on the side  
For money to pay a doctor's bill for my little girl.  
Then like a bolt old Rhodes accused me,  
And promised me mercy for my family's sake  
If I confessed, and so I confessed,  
And begged him to keep it out of the papers,  
And I asked the editors, too.  
That night at home the constable took me  
And every paper, except the Clarion,  
Wrote me up as a thief  
Because old Rhodes was an advertiser  
And wanted to make an example of me.  
Oh! well, you know how the children cried,  
And how my wife pitied and hated me,  
And how I came to lie here.

**Mrs. George Reece**

To this generation I would say:  
Memorize some bit of verse of truth or beauty.  
It may serve a turn in your life.  
My husband had nothing to do  
With the fall of the bank--he was only cashier.  
The wreck was due to the president, Thomas Rhodes,  
And his vain, unscrupulous son.  
Yet my husband was sent to prison,  
And I was left with the children,  
To feed and clothe and school them.  
And I did it, and sent them forth  
Into the world all clean and strong,  
And all through the wisdom of Pope, the poet:  
"Act well your part, there all the honor lies."

**Jack McGuire**

THEY would have lynched me  
Had I not been secretly hurried away  
To the jail at Peoria.  
And yet I was going peacefully home,  
Carrying my jug, a little drunk,  
When Logan, the marshal, halted me  
Called me a drunken hound and shook me  
And, when I cursed him for it, struck me  
With that Prohibition loaded cane--  
All this before I shot him.  
They would have hanged me except for this:  
My lawyer, Kinsey Keene, was helping to land  
Old Thomas Rhodes for wrecking the bank,  
And the judge was a friend of  
Rhodes And wanted him to escape,  
And Kinsey offered to quit on  
Rhodes For fourteen years for me.  
And the bargain was made.  
I served my time  
And learned to read and write.

*Continued on the next page....*

### Nicholas Bindle

Were you not ashamed, fellow citizens,  
 When my estate was probated and everyone knew  
 How small a fortune I left?--  
 You who hounded me in life,  
 To give, give, give to the churches, to the poor,  
 To the village!--me who had already given much.  
 And think you not I did not know  
 That the pipe-organ, which I gave to the church,  
 Played its christening songs when Deacon Rhodes,  
 Who broke and all but ruined me,  
 Worshipped for the first time after his acquittal?

### Henry Phipps

I WAS the Sunday-school superintendent,  
 The dummy president of the wagon works  
 And the canning factory,  
 Acting for Thomas Rhodes and the banking clique;  
 My son the cashier of the bank,  
 Wedded to Rhodes, daughter,  
 My week days spent in making money,  
 My Sundays at church and in prayer.  
 In everything a cog in the wheel of things--as--they--are:  
 Of money, master and man, made white  
 With the paint of the Christian creed.  
 And then:  
 The bank collapsed.  
 I stood and hooked at the wrecked machine--  
 The wheels with blow-holes stopped with putty and painted;  
 The rotten bolts, the broken rods;  
 And only the hopper for souls fit to be used again  
 In a new devourer of life,  
 When newspapers, judges and money-magicians  
 Build over again.  
 I was stripped to the bone, but I lay in the Rock of Ages,  
 Seeing now through the game, no longer a dupe,  
 And knowing "the upright shall dwell in the land  
 But the years of the wicked shall be shortened."  
 Then suddenly, Dr. Meyers discovered  
 A cancer in my liver.  
 I was not, after all, the particular care of God  
 Why, even thus standing on a peak  
 Above the mists through which I had climbed,  
 And ready for larger life in the world,  
 Eternal forces  
 Moved me on with a push.

Writing Option #1: Describe each character and explain what part the character played in "The Rhodes Affair." Include the voice (tone) of the character as well as the feeling (mood) it creates in the reader.

Model:

Eugene Carman is bitter and resentful. For 14 years he worked long hours for little pay in a store owned by Thomas Rhodes. Because Rhodes was influential in the church, Carman had to attend services twice a week to keep up appearances. Overcome by rage and resentment for spending so much of his life as "Rhodes' slave," he starts screaming at his reflection, which causes him to have a brain aneurysm and die. I feel sorry for Eugene Carman because he believed he was powerless; he felt that he was controlled by Thomas Rhodes. Maybe he really was.

### Ralph Rhodes

ALL they said was true:  
 I wrecked my father's bank with my loans  
 To dabble in wheat; but this was true--  
 I was buying wheat for him as well,  
 Who couldn't margin the deal in his name  
 Because of his church relationship.  
 And while George Reece was serving his term  
 I chased the will-o-the-wisp of women  
 And the mockery of wine in New York.  
 It's deathly to sicken of wine and women  
 When nothing else is left in life.  
 But suppose your head is gray, and bowed  
 On a table covered with acrid stubs  
 Of cigarettes and empty glasses,  
 And a knock is heard, and you know it's the knock  
 So long drowned out by popping corks  
 And the pea-cock screams of demireps--  
 And you look up, and there's your Theft,  
 Who waited until your head was gray,  
 And your heart skipped beats to say to you:  
 The game is ended. I've called for you,  
 Go out on Broadway and be run over,  
 They'll ship you back to Spoon River.

### Thomas Rhodes

VERY well, you liberals,  
 And navigators into realms intellectual,  
 You sailors through heights imaginative,  
 Blown about by erratic currents, tumbling into air pockets,  
 You Margaret Fuller Slacks, Petits,  
 And Tennessee Claflin Shopes--  
 You found with all your boasted wisdom  
 How hard at the last it is  
 To keep the soul from splitting into cellular atoms.  
 While we, seekers of earth's treasures  
 Getters and hoarders of gold,  
 Are self-contained, compact, harmonized,  
 Even to the end.

\* \* \* \* \*

Writing Option #2: What kind of a man was Thomas Rhodes, and what influence did he have on the town of Spoon River? Write a one-page character sketch of Rhodes. Include a specific quotation from each epitaph to support your description. Be sure to include a clear descriptive statement [claim] about Rhodes that can be supported with specific textual evidence from the other epitaphs.

Model:

[Claim] Thomas Rhodes was \_\_\_\_\_.  
 [Textual Evidence] Clarence Fawcett said, "\_\_\_\_\_."  
 [Reasoning] This shows that Rhodes \_\_\_\_\_. Also,  
 [Textual Evidence] Mrs. George Reece indicated that Rhodes  
 \_\_\_\_\_ when she wrote, "\_\_\_\_\_."  
 Another character with an opinion about Thomas Rhodes was Nicholas Bindle. [Textual Evidence/Reasoning] He was upset because \_\_\_\_\_.  
 [Textual Evidence] Henry Phipps noted, "\_\_\_\_\_" which illustrates [Reasoning] that \_\_\_\_\_.  
 To top it off, [Textual Evidence] Rhodes himself says, "\_\_\_\_\_" [Reasoning] which shows that he is truly \_\_\_\_\_.  
 In conclusion, \_\_\_\_\_.

**Fiddler Jones**

THE earth keeps some vibration going  
There in your heart, and that is you.  
And if the people find you can fiddle,  
Why, fiddle you must, for all your life.  
What do you see, a harvest of clover?  
Or a meadow to walk through to the river?  
The wind's in the corn; you rub your hands  
For beeves hereafter ready for market;  
Or else you hear the rustle of skirts  
Like the girls when dancing at Little Grove.  
To Cooney Potter a pillar of dust  
Or whirling leaves meant ruinous drouth;  
They looked to me like Red-Head Sammy  
Stepping it off, to "Toor-a-Loor."  
How could I till my forty acres  
Not to speak of getting more,  
With a medley of horns, bassoons and piccolos  
Stirred in my brain by crows and robins  
And the creak of a wind-mill—only these?  
And I never started to plow in my life  
That some one did not stop in the road  
And take me away to a dance or picnic.  
I ended up with forty acres;  
I ended up with a broken fiddle—  
And a broken laugh, and a thousand memories,  
And not a single regret.

**Cooney Potter**

I INHERITED forty acres from my Father  
And, by working my wife, my two sons and two daughters  
From dawn to dusk, I acquired a thousand acres.  
But not content,  
Wishing to own two thousand acres,  
I hustled through the years with axe and plow,  
Toiling, denying myself, my wife, my sons, my daughters.  
Squire Higbee wrongs me to say  
That I died from smoking Red Eagle cigars.  
Eating hot pie and gulping coffee  
During the scorching hours of harvest time  
Brought me here ere I had reached my sixtieth year.

**Amos Sibley**

NOT character, not fortitude, not patience  
Were mine, the which the village thought I had  
In bearing with my wife, while preaching on,  
Doing the work God chose for me.  
I loathed her as a termagant, as a wanton.  
I knew of her adulteries, every one.  
But even so, if I divorced the woman  
I must forsake the ministry.  
Therefore to do God's work and have it crop,  
I bore with her  
So lied I to myself  
So lied I to Spoon River!  
Yet I tried lecturing, ran for the legislature,  
Canvassed for books, with just the thought in mind:  
If I make money thus,  
I will divorce her.

**Mrs. Sibley**

THE secret of the stars—gravitation.  
The secret of the earth—layers of rock.  
The secret of the soil—to receive seed.  
The secret of the seed—the germ.  
The secret of man—the sower.  
The secret of woman—the soil.  
My secret: Under a mound that you shall never find.

**Ollie McGee**

HAVE you seen walking through the village  
A man with downcast eyes and haggard face?  
That is my husband who, by secret cruelty  
Never to be told, robbed me of my youth and my beauty;  
Till at last, wrinkled and with yellow teeth,  
And with broken pride and shameful humility,  
I sank into the grave.  
But what think you gnaws at my husband's heart? The face of what I  
was, the face of what he made me!  
These are driving him to the place where I lie.  
In death, therefore, I am avenged.

**Fletcher McGee**

SHE took my strength by minutes,  
She took my life by hours,  
She drained me like a fevered moon  
That saps the spinning world.  
The days went by like shadows,  
The minutes wheeled like stars.  
She took the pity from my heart,  
And made it into smiles.  
She was a hunk of sculptor's clay,  
My secret thoughts were fingers:  
They flew behind her pensive brow  
And lined it deep with pain.  
They set the lips, and sagged the cheeks,  
And drooped the eye with sorrow.  
My soul had entered in the clay,  
Fighting like seven devils.  
It was not mine, it was not hers;  
She held it, but its struggles  
Modeled a face she hated,  
And a face I feared to see.  
I beat the windows, shook the bolts.  
I hid me in a corner  
And then she died and haunted me,  
And hunted me for life.

**Chase Henry**

IN life I was the town drunkard;  
When I died the priest denied me burial  
In holy ground.  
The which redounded to my good fortune.  
For the Protestants bought this lot,  
And buried my body here,  
Close to the grave of the banker Nicholas,  
And of his wife Priscilla.  
Take note, ye prudent and pious souls,  
Of the cross—currents in life  
Which bring honor to the dead, who lived in shame.

**Judge Somers**

HOW does it happen, tell me,  
That I who was most erudite of lawyers,  
Who knew Blackstone and Coke  
Almost by heart, who made the greatest speech  
The court-house ever heard, and wrote  
A brief that won the praise of Justice Breese  
How does it happen, tell me,  
That I lie here unmarked, forgotten,  
While Chase Henry, the town drunkard,  
Has a marble block, topped by an urn  
Wherein Nature, in a mood ironical,  
Has sown a flowering weed?

**Penniwit, the Artist**

I LOST my patronage in Spoon River  
 From trying to put my mind in the camera  
 To catch the soul of the person.  
 The very best picture I ever took  
 Was of Judge Somers, attorney at law.  
 He sat upright and had me pause  
 Till he got his cross-eye straight.  
 Then when he was ready he said "all right."  
 And I yelled "overruled" and his eye turned up.  
 And I caught him just as he used to look  
 When saying "I except."

**Elsa Wertman**

I WAS a peasant girl from Germany,  
 Blue-eyed, rosy, happy and strong.  
 And the first place I worked was at Thomas Greene's.  
 On a summer's day when she was away  
 He stole into the kitchen and took me  
 Right in his arms and kissed me on my throat,  
 I turning my head. Then neither of us  
 Seemed to know what happened.  
 And I cried for what would become of me.  
 And cried and cried as my secret began to show.  
 One day Mrs. Greene said she understood,  
 And would make no trouble for me,  
 And, being childless, would adopt it.  
 (He had given her a farm to be still.)  
 So she hid in the house and sent out rumors,  
 As if it were going to happen to her.  
 And all went well and the child was born—  
 They were so kind to me.  
 Later I married Gus Wertman, and years passed.  
 But—at political rallies when sitters-by thought I was crying  
 At the eloquence of Hamilton Greene—  
 That was not it. No! I wanted to say:  
 That's my son! That's my son.

**Hamilton Greene**

I WAS the only child of Frances Harris of Virginia  
 And Thomas Greene of Kentucky,  
 Of valiant and honorable blood both.  
 To them I owe all that I became,  
 Judge, member of Congress, leader in the State.  
 From my mother I inherited  
 Vivacity, fancy, language;  
 From my father will, judgment, logic.  
 All honor to them  
 For what service I was to the people!

**Jack McGuire**

THEY would have lynched me  
 Had I not been secretly hurried away  
 To the jail at Peoria.  
 And yet I was going peacefully home,  
 Carrying my jug, a little drunk,  
 When Logan, the marshal, halted me  
 Called me a drunken hound and shook me  
 And, when I cursed him for it, struck me  
 With that Prohibition loaded cane—  
 All this before I shot him.  
 They would have hanged me except for this:  
 My lawyer, Kinsey Keene, was helping to land  
 Old Thomas Rhodes for wrecking the bank,  
 And the judge was a friend of  
 Rhodes And wanted him to escape,  
 And Kinsey offered to quit on  
 Rhodes For fourteen years for me.  
 And the bargain was made.  
 I served my time  
 And learned to read and write.

**Town Marshal**

THE Prohibitionists made me Town Marshal  
 When the saloons were voted out,  
 Because when I was a drinking man,  
 Before I joined the church, I killed a Swede  
 At the saw-mill near Maple Grove.  
 And they wanted a terrible man,  
 Grim, righteous, strong, courageous,  
 And a hater of saloons and drinkers,  
 To keep law and order in the village.  
 And they presented me with a loaded cane  
 With which I struck Jack McGuire  
 Before he drew the gun with which he killed  
 The Prohibitionists spent their money in vain  
 To hang him, for in a dream  
 I appeared to one of the twelve jurymen  
 And told him the whole secret story.  
 Fourteen years were enough for killing me.

**Editor Whedon**

TO BE able to see every side of every question;  
 To be on every side, to be everything, to be nothing long;  
 To pervert truth, to ride it for a purpose,  
 To use great feelings and passions of the human family  
 For base designs, for cunning ends,  
 To wear a mask like the Greek actors--  
 Your eight-page paper -- behind which you huddle,  
 Brawling through the megaphone of big type:  
 "This is I, the giant."  
 Thereby also living the life of a sneak-thief,  
 Poisoned with the anonymous words  
 Of your clandestine soul.  
 To scratch dirt over scandal for money,  
 And exhume it to the winds for revenge,  
 Or to sell papers,  
 Crushing reputations, or bodies, if need be,  
 To win at any cost, to save your own life.  
 To glory in demoniac power, ditching civilization,  
 As a paranoiac boy puts a log on the track  
 And derails the express train.  
 To be an editor, as I was.  
 Then to lie here close by the river over the place  
 Where the sewage flows from the village,  
 And the empty cans and garbage are dumped,  
 And abortions are hidden.

**Carl Hamblin**

THE press of the Spoon River Clarion was wrecked,  
 And I was tarred and feathered,  
 For publishing this on the day the  
 Anarchists were hanged in Chicago:  
 "I saw a beautiful woman with bandaged eyes  
 Standing on the steps of a marble temple.  
 Great multitudes passed in front of her,  
 Lifting their faces to her imploringly.  
 In her left hand she held a sword.  
 She was brandishing the sword,  
 Sometimes striking a child, again a laborer,  
 Again a slinking woman, again a lunatic.  
 In her right hand she held a scale;  
 Into the scale pieces of gold were tossed  
 By those who dodged the strokes of the sword.  
 A man in a black gown read from a manuscript:  
 "She is no respecter of persons."  
 Then a youth wearing a red cap  
 Leaped to her side and snatched away the bandage.  
 And lo, the lashes had been eaten away  
 From the oozy eye-lids;  
 The eye-balls were seared with a milky mucus;  
 The madness of a dying soul  
 Was written on her face—  
 But the multitude saw why she wore the bandage."

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Spoon River Anthology Review**  
(You'll need your list of *Literary Terms and Definitions!*)

1. The epitaph of Judge Somers only contains one end punctuation mark. Grammatically, it is only a single interrogative sentence. Which literary device is illustrated by the sentence?

2. Who are "Blackstone and Coke"? (Use the glossary.)

3. The reference to these historical figures is an \_\_\_\_\_.

4. What bothers Judge Somers?

5. In the game, what tasks do you have to complete to put the spirit of Judge Somers at peace?

*Review the epitaph of Chase Henry (p. 16):*

6. Describe Chase Henry's tone (voice) in this epitaph. (How does he feel?)

7. Write an example of *alliteration* found in Chase Henry's epitaph.

8. What does Chase Henry want everyone to know?

9. From the context of this poem, you can tell that *redounded* means \_\_\_\_\_.

*Review the epitaph of Editor Whedon (p. 90):*

10. According to Editor Whedon, what kinds of things does a newspaper editor do?

11. What is the name of the literary device used throughout the epitaph by which the editor compares himself to one of the Greek actors who wore masks?

12. The first two lines of Editor Whedon's epitaph are an example of which literary device?

13. Where is Editor Whedon's grave located?

*Review the epitaph of Carl Hamblin (p. 89):*

14. What is Carl Hamblin's occupation?

15. Carl Hamblin's mention of the Anarchists who supported the striking labor unions is an example of \_\_\_\_\_.

16. According to Carl, whom do the courts serve?

17. Ideally, who is punished by the "sword of justice"?

18. According to Carl Hamblin, what does the sword of justice actually do?

19. Is there any alliteration in Carl Hamblin's epitaph? (Circle one.)

Yes

No

20. In the game, what do you have to do to put the spirit of Carl Hamblin at peace?

*Review the epitaph of The Town Marshall (p. 34):*

21. Why did the prohibitionists make him the town marshal?

22. Why does the marshal think Jack McGuire got off with only 14 years for his murder?

Review the epitaph of Jack McGuire (p. 35):

23. How did Jack kill the Town Marshall?

24. Why is Jack moved to a jail in Peoria?

25. What is the real reason Jack McGuire got off with only 14 years for a murder sentence?

26. In the game, what do you have to do to put the spirit of Jack McGuire to rest?

Review the epitaphs of Ollie and Fletcher McGee (pp.11 & 12):

27. What did Fletcher do to Ollie? How?

28. Who died first?

29. Lines 9-20 of Fletcher's epitaph are an example of what literary device?

30. In the game, what do you have to do to put the spirit of Ollie McGee to rest?

Review the epitaphs of Cooney Potter and Fiddler Jones (pp. 46 & 47):

31. How did Cooney Potter spend his life?

32. How did Fiddler Jones spend his life?

33. Why might many people consider Fiddler Jones a failure?

34. Why is Cooney Potter unhappy with the way things turned out for him?

35. In the game, what do you have to do to put the spirit of Cooney Potter to rest?

Review the epitaphs of Elsa Wertman and Hamilton Greene (p. 79):

36. What does Hamilton Greene not know?

37. In the game, what do you have to do to put the spirit of Elsa Wertman to rest?

38. What did Thomas Greene give to his wife to keep her from sharing the real story with the rest of the town?

Review the epitaphs of Amos Sibley and his wife (pp.81 & 82):

39. Why does Amos Sibley not divorce his wife even though she cheats on him?

40. In the game, what do you have to do to put the spirit of Mrs. Sibley to rest?

Review the epitaph of Penniwit the Artist (p.77) and answer this question:

41. Why does Penniwit not make money as a photographer in Spoon River?

42. In the game, how does Penniwit play into the issue that must be resolved for another character

**ep·i·taph** (noun)

Etymology: Middle English *epitaphe*, from Middle French & Medieval Latin; Middle French, from Medieval Latin *epitaphium*, from Latin, funeral oration, from Greek *epitaphion*, from *epi-* + *taphos* tomb

**1** : an inscription on or at a tomb or a grave in memory of the one buried there

**2** : a brief statement commemorating or epitomizing a deceased person or something past

## Roscoe Purkapile

SHE loved me. Oh! how she loved me!  
I never had a chance to escape  
From the day she first saw me.  
But then after we were married I thought  
She might prove her mortality and let me out, 5  
Or she might divorce me.  
But few die, none resign.  
Then I ran away and was gone a year on a lark.  
But she never complained. She said all would be well,  
That I would return. And I did return. 10  
I told her that while taking a row in a boat  
I had been captured near Van Buren Street  
By pirates on Lake Michigan,  
And kept in chains, so I could not write her.  
She cried and kissed me, and said it was cruel, 15  
Outrageous, inhuman!  
I then concluded our marriage  
Was a divine dispensation  
And could not be dissolved,  
Except by death. 20  
I was right.

1. Who is the **speaker**? What is the point of view?
2. What is the **tone**?
3. Circle examples of **figurative language** (and tell what kind in the margins).
4. Underline any **poetic devices** (and tell what kind in the margins).
5. What is a **theme** that the poem illustrates?

## Mrs. Purkapile

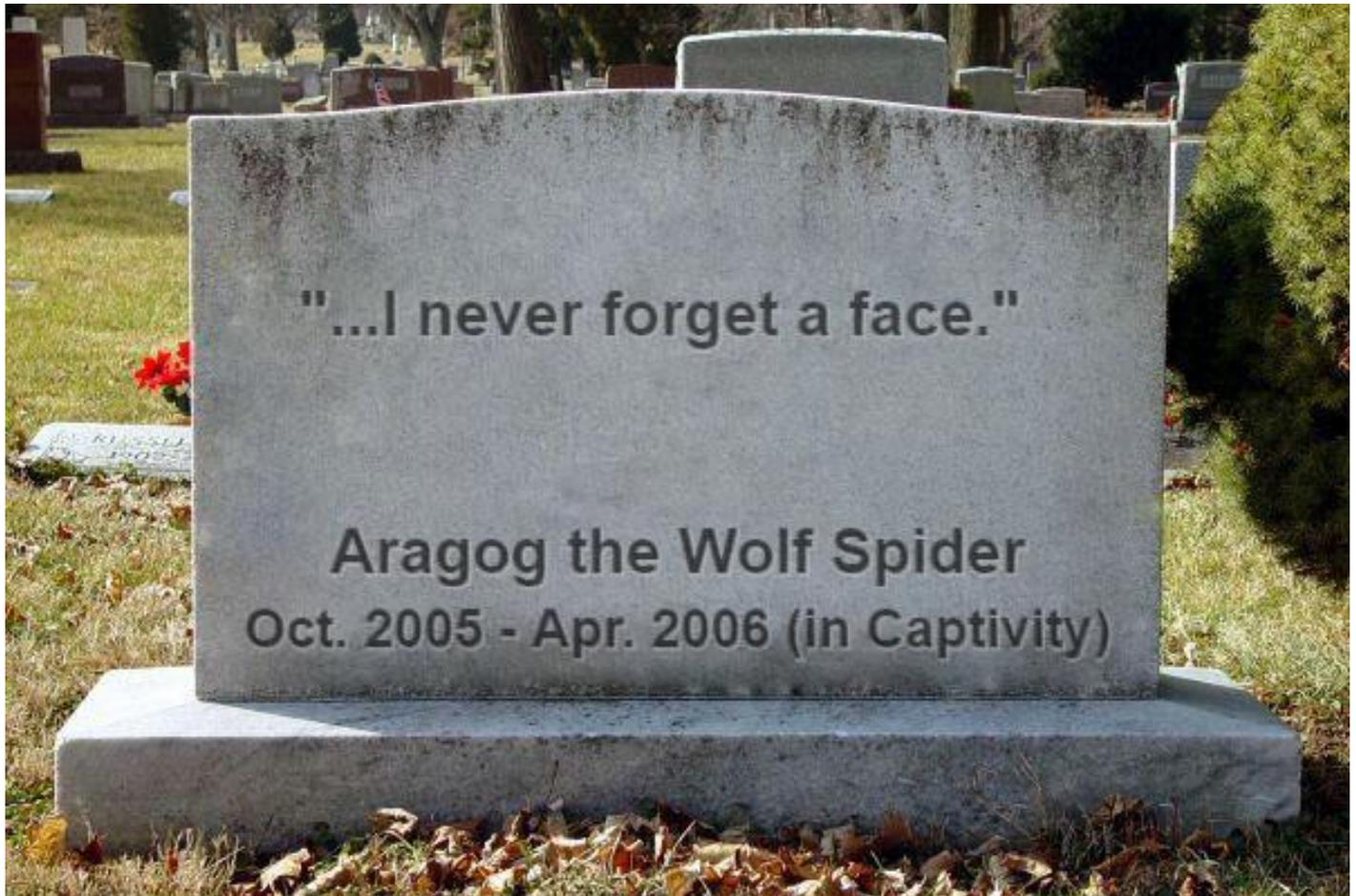
HE ran away and was gone for a year.  
When he came home he told me the silly story  
Of being kidnapped by pirates on Lake Michigan  
And kept in chains so he could not write me.  
I pretended to believe it, though I knew very well 5  
What he was doing, and that he met  
The milliner, Mrs. Williams, now and then  
When she went to the city to buy goods, as she said.  
But a promise is a promise  
And marriage is marriage, 10  
And out of respect for my own character  
I refused to be drawn into a divorce  
By the scheme of a husband who had merely grown tired  
Of his marital vow and duty.

1. Who is the **speaker**? What is the point of view?
2. What is the **tone**?
3. Circle examples of **figurative language** (and tell what kind in the margins).
4. Underline any **poetic devices** (and tell what kind in the margins).
5. What is a **theme** that the poem illustrates?
6. How does the **cross-reference** of the two poems help you understand the “whole story”?

## Paired Epitaphs: The Classroom Graveyard

Many of the epitaphs in *Spoon River Anthology* cross-reference others within the collection. By reading an entire cluster of such epitaphs, a reader gets “the whole story” rather than just one character’s side of it. Now that you’ve had some practice reading and writing poetic epitaphs, it’s time to try your hand at a small collection of your own.

- 1) Choose a pair (more if you’re ambitious) of characters from a novel, movie, or well-known story.
- 2) Write a free verse poetic epitaph for each of these characters that includes the following:
  - a. Two poetic comparisons: metaphor and/or simile
  - b. Parallel structure
  - c. Allusion to a widely-known event or person
  - d. Alliteration (keep it discreet: not ten words in a row)
  - e. Rhetorical question
  - f. A cross-reference to the other character so the reader knows “the whole story”
- 3) Write or mount your final drafts on a pair of appropriate “headstones” of your own creation. Creativity and neatness count!
  - a. When placed together, the final epitaphs should not be much larger than an 8½ x 11 sheet of paper.
  - b. Decorate the “headstones” in a way that is suitable to the content of the epitaphs and to the characters about which they are written.
- 4) The “headstones” with the epitaphs on them will be displayed in the classroom “graveyard”. Do your best work!



## Cross-referenced Epitaphs Plan Sheet

Names of Characters		
Occupation/How Days are Spent		
Hobbies/Leisure Activities		
Details of Character's Death		
Significant Life Events		
Outlook on Life and/or Advice		
Feelings about Other Character		
Likenesses and/or Differences		
Significant Physical Traits or Abilities		
<b>Tone</b> of Epitaph (specific adjective)		

Use the outline above to write (on separate pages) a pair of cross-referenced epitaphs like those in the *Spoon River Anthology*. Write in first-person (*I, me, mine*), assuming the voice and tone of the character. What does each character feel strongly about? What diction (word choice, imagery, and figurative language) will best express the tone of the speaker? Let the thoughts and strong emotions of the character come out in a poetic way that will create the desired mood in the reader. Make conscious choices about where line breaks occur; the physical arrangement of the lines will contribute to the epitaph's effectiveness. The final draft of your epitaphs should be neat and free of errors, and they must include the following poetic elements:

- Descriptive **Imagery**
- Figurative Language: 1) **metaphor** or **extended metaphor**; 2) **personification** or **symbolism**; 3) **irony** (any type)
- Poetic Devices: 1) **alliteration** or **assonance**; 2) **repetition** or **refrain**; 3) **parallel structure**; 4) **rhetorical question**
- **NO RHYME**

All of these concepts are defined on the handout called *Poetry Terms*.

## Poetic Epitaphs: Checklist for Final Drafts

- Two (2) cross-referenced epitaphs should be...
  - ...side-by-side on one page
  - OR
  - each on its own separate page.
- Put your name and the title of your source material on the BACK of the page(s). Only the epitaphs should be on the front – no headings, assignment titles, dates, etc.
  - Appropriate, artistic decorations are okay.
- Final drafts should be free of errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Final drafts should be in dark ink: typed or very neatly handwritten.
- The epitaphs should do more than just summarize an existing story; they need to express the relationship between the characters and/or illustrate new information that would not be clear from reading only one of the epitaphs.
- Epitaphs should be in the first-person, assuming the voice and tone of the character.
- The physical arrangement of the lines should look like poetry, with appropriate line breaks and spacing.
- The epitaphs should contain the following poetic elements:
  - descriptive imagery
  - a metaphor or an extended metaphor
  - personification or symbolism
  - some kind of irony
  - alliteration and/or assonance
  - repetition and/or a refrain
  - some parallel structure
  - at least one rhetorical question
- The epitaphs should NOT rhyme.
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Juliet

It seems so unfair!

I, the dutiful daughter, did my parents' bidding  
for almost 14 years:

Excelling in language at school,  
Excelling in propriety at home.

Throughout Verona, I was known as the perfect child:

Darling, obedient, socially adept.

No more could I do to make him proud,  
And proud he was.

Until...

You know the story -- how I came to lie here:

Once part of Friar's complicated scheme,  
Again by my own hand.

But it was my dad who complicated everything!

Bad enough to continue a feud for unremembered reasons,

But what was he thinking when he promised me as a bride?

I was nothing more than cattle –

Raised on only the finest grasses and grains,  
Nursed and weaned by one who would betray me,  
Readied for market by a conniving mother,  
Paraded in finest array before leering eyes,  
And sold to a butcher named Paris.

All for the price of an old man's pride!

It was not love for Romeo that brought me here.

Before extinguishing my own brief candle, I thought of my father.

And revenge.

## Capulet

When I saw the bloody knife, I knew what she'd done.

I loved her more than I was able to tell her.

She made me so proud!

She *was* so proud!

Her pride met mine headlong:

Teeth and claws bared,

Snarling in fury and ripping flesh,

These raging bears battled,

one for territory, her place in the world, her identity;

the other only to protect his cub.

I knew she felt nothing for Paris, but he was a noble figure to

Provide for her needs,

Treat her with kindness

Care for her when I was gone.

If I could live again, I would forgo tradition:

Apologize, make amends, and shake Montague's hand,

Not on the day of Juliet's funeral,

But on the day of her birth!

That I might have known her into my old age,

Seen her married to the one she loved,

Met my grandchildren.

Cruel stars!

Why does she press before me to the grave?

It seems so unfair!

## Odysseus

Twenty long years!

Taken to fight a war for a faithless woman, forced to leave the faithful one behind, I left Ithaca, not knowing if I would ever see her shores again.

I devised the trick of the Trojan Horse, won the war, and

Assured my fame as the wiliest of heroes.

But I missed my son's childhood, never saw him learn to hunt or fight or work as a man should before the gods of bliss.

In my many months at sea, I conquered Polyphemus, bored out his great eye and escaped his island;

I survived the grappling tentacled heads and razor teeth of Scylla and lost my ship to the gaping maw of Charybdis.

Heroic deeds which sent my fame abroad to the sky's rim.

But I lost my crew, my friends, my brothers in arms -- fools who feasted on the cattle of Lord Helios -- and great Zeus took from their eyes the dawn of their return.

When I finally returned home -- ragged, beaten, humbled -- I fought once again to regain my kingdom.

By Athena's grace, and in secret disguise, I plotted with my trusted servants and my newly met son, now a man with a beard on his chin.

Together we destroyed the suitors, without mercy, without fear. Every last man who vied for my Penelope died in a river of his own blood.

My story is well known, full of glory and guile and courage.

The people look to me as a model of what a man should be.

I've earned a place in the hearts of the gods.

But I'd trade it all to have those twenty years at home with the wife who waited for me.

## Penelope

They called me Queen of Ithaca,

but I never enjoyed the ease and pampering of royalty.

My husband, the hero about whom you have heard so much, was gone for most of our marriage.

It was hard not to hate him, although I knew it wasn't his choice.

I raised our son alone, and he grew to be a noble man despite his absent father,

Who was off battling monsters and spending years with

Goddesses to whom I cannot compare in beauty.

I held off the suitors for years, those pigs who would have stolen the throne of Odysseus and murdered his son.

They wanted the power of a king but they did not care for me any more than I cared for them.

I remained true.

I devised the test of the great bow, which allowed Odysseus to regain his throne, his kingdom, and his life.

(I knew all along who that beggar really was!)

But I am not remembered as a hero,

Only as the faithful wife:

The patient, long-suffering, steadfast Penelope.

If I had it all to do over again...

...I'd go with him to Troy.

I'll bet it wouldn't take us twenty years to get home, either.

I'm not ashamed to ask for directions.

## Captain Beatty

I spent my life pretending to be the opposite of what I was:

A poet who burned Whitman on Wednesday,

A philosopher who incinerated Plato with grim pleasure,

A playwright who shunned Shakespeare.

Kerosene was my lifeblood, or so the others thought...if you call it thinking.

They never noticed how much I knew about the books we burned, thoughtless fools.

Then Montag did the favor of burning *me*: a final fitting irony, unless you know the truth.

I wanted to die.

A life of deception—ignoring the war while the world flung itself to pieces, smiling while the charred books died like slaughtered birds, lecturing in simple platitudes that sounded so fresh to the ignorant and uninformed—left me  
in despair.

For where can hope be found in a world that burns all responsibility?

The Happiness Boys, we called ourselves.

They never suspected a thing.

No one knew me.



