
Paper One: Things and Ideas

T.S. Eliot described the main mechanism of poetry as the *objective correlative*. In an essay on *Hamlet* from 1922, Eliot writes,

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an “objective correlative”; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. If you examine any of Shakespeare's more successful tragedies, you will find this exact equivalence; you will find that the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep has been communicated to you by a skilful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions; the words of Macbeth on hearing of his wife's death strike us as if, given the sequence of events, these words were automatically released by the last event in the series. The artistic “inevitability” lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion

In what we have read so far, ideas are described as having the qualities of things. The **sorrow** of the woman speaking in *Wulf & Eadwacer* has “rainy weather” for an objective correlative.

1. Choose an image or a thing (cloud, island, bird, water, sun, rain, arms, head, heart, hand, flower, wind, earth, dirt, and so on) from one of the works we have read.
2. Research its symbolic meaning. Use “A Bibliography of Symbolism” that has been provided for you.
3. Explain in 500 words its many meanings, and in another 1000 words, how the image affects your understanding of the work it came from. Total of 1500 words.