

# On the Death of Richard West

By Thomas Gray

In vain to me the smiling Mornings shine,  
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire;  
The birds in vain their amorous descant join;  
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire;  
These ears, alas! for other notes repine,  
A different object do these eyes require;  
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;  
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.  
Yet Morning smiles the busy race to cheer,  
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;  
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;  
To warm their little loves the birds complain;  
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,  
And weep the more because I weep in vain.



Thomas Gray was born in London and was the only of twelve siblings to survive. Although his family had a modest income, Gray was able to attend Eton and Cambridge with his uncle's help. In 1742 he wrote his first important poems, including "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College." When he wrote, he perfected each line before moving on to the next; he took years to complete "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," now one of the most frequently quoted English poems.