

Student Essay on Edwin Arlington Robinson's "Miniver Cheevy"

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Essay

In Edwin Arlington Robinson's poem, the character, Miniver Cheevy, is a self-pitying dreamer who blames the world for his social status and poverty. The name Miniver Cheevy means to be an underachiever, minute accomplisher, and takes little action for his future. All of these weak characteristics hold true for the protagonist in the poem "Miniver Cheevy." One must express sympathy for a man "with reasons" to have "wept that he was ever born", but once it is understood that Miniver escapes the world of reality into his dreams induced by alcohol, the reader has a hard time still being compassionate for him.

Miniver Cheevy is an idealistic romantic, daydreaming of living and existing in another era where he wishes he were a knight in shining armor: "the medieval grace/of iron clothing." He despises the plain and ordinary common man in a "khaki suit." He believes he should have been born "when swords were bright and steeds were prancing." He feels he would have been happier and more successful living during medieval times. Yet it is clear with his drinking that he would have been no more victorious than he is now. Instead of living in the reality of the present time, he chooses to romance the hopeless thoughts of "The Thebes and Camelot/And Priam's neighbors." The reasons for his failure, he believes, are not his fault, but it is his unfortunate destiny.

By drinking his life away, Miniver Cheevy chooses his own "fate" by wallowing in his own self-pity. Unfortunately, it is the alcohol that destroys his drive and motivation to live within the present time. Miniver Cheevy is a man who dwells on the "what if's" of life. Ironically, Miniver "mourned" to be honored and have fame, yet he lives as "a vagrant." Instead of trying to change his current social and financial status he chooses to intoxicate himself with the unrealistic dreams.