

# An In-Depth Morphological and Syntactic Analysis of the Poetic Language in *The Snow-Storm* by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Muhammad Haroon Jakhrani<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MPhil English, Institute of Southern Punjab Multan, Pakistan

Correspondence: Muhammad Haroon Jakhrani, MPhil English, Institute of Southern Punjab Multan, Pakistan.

doi:10.56397/SSSH.2023.06.01

## Abstract

This research paper is a critical analysis of Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem, *The Snow-Storm*. The paper examines the morphological and syntactic structure of the poem, analyzing its literary devices and themes. The analysis highlights the use of inversion, inflection, repetition, and metaphors in contributing to the poem's central themes, such as the insignificance of humans in nature, the power of nature over humanity, and the constant flux of life. Additionally, this paper draws attention to the poem's relevance to contemporary environmental issues, suggesting that the poem could reflect the importance of protecting and preserving nature. The limitations and scope of the research paper are also discussed. This research paper's contribution to literary, social, and environmental studies is significant, as it illustrates literature's interpretive possibilities in reflecting upon contemporary issues and human experiences.

**Keywords:** Ralph Waldo Emerson, poetic language, morphology, syntax, in-depth analysis

## 1. Introduction

Ralph Waldo Emerson is one of the most famous American poets of the 19th century, with noteworthy works such as *The Snow-Storm*. His poetry is known for its complex nature, employing various literary devices to convey his thoughts effectively. As Emerson's poetry is a topic of interest for literary enthusiasts and scholars, analyzing the morphological and syntactic structure of his work, specifically *The Snow-Storm*, can reveal the underlying themes and emotions conveyed through the poem.

*The Snow-Storm* is a poem written by the American transcendentalist poet, essayist, and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson. The poem was first published in 1835 and is regarded as one of his best works. It describes a violent snowstorm that blankets the landscape, highlighting the overpowering force of nature and the insignificance of humans in its midst. The poem celebrates the beauty and power of nature, emphasizing its endless cycle of life and death. *The Snow-Storm* reflects the themes of transcendentalism, including the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of individual experience in understanding the universe. The poem's literary devices, such as inversion, inflection, repetition, and metaphor, contribute to its impact and highlight its enduring relevance to contemporary society, as a call to remember the importance of coexisting with nature.

### 1.1 Significance of Research

The research paper on *The Snow-Storm* by Ralph Waldo Emerson is significant in several ways. Firstly, it reflects the critical analysis of the literary work, providing an in-depth understanding of the poem's structure, literary devices, and themes. The paper also offers a new perspective on the poem, highlighting its relevance to contemporary environmental issues and illustrating the timeless nature of Emerson's ideas.

Moreover, the significance of this research paper lies in its contribution to the broader field of literary studies. The paper provides a methodology for literary analysis, displaying the importance of examining morphological

and syntactic structures in poetry and their connection to the overarching themes. Thus, the paper is valuable for scholars, students, and literary enthusiasts interested in gaining a nuanced understanding of poetry and its interpretive possibilities.

In addition, the significance of this paper also lies in its relevance to the public. The analysis of *The Snow-Storm* drawing attention to the potential environmental message in the poem serves to raise awareness of environmental challenges and the necessity of humans to protect and preserve nature.

Therefore, this research paper offers a multi-disciplinary approach to interpreting literature and highlights the lasting relevance of Emerson's work, making a valuable contribution to literary, social, and environmental studies.

### 1.2 Limitations and Scope of Research

The research paper on *The Snow-Storm* by Ralph Waldo Emerson has some limitations and a defined scope. The following are some of the limitations and scope of this research paper.

#### 1.2.1 Limitations

- 1) The research paper may not cover all aspects of the poem, as literature is open to multiple interpretations.
- 2) The analysis of the poem's structure, literary devices, and themes may be subjective depending on the researcher's perspective.
- 3) This research is based on a single literary work, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.

#### 1.2.2 Scope

- 1) The paper analyzes the literary aspects of the poem, including its structure, literary devices, and themes.
- 2) The paper draws attention to the relevance of the poem to contemporary environmental issues and illustrates the well-established and timeless nature of Emerson's ideas.
- 3) The paper contributes a critical reading of the poem, highlighting its wider implications for both literary analysis and contemporary social and environmental issues.

In summary, the scope of this research paper is focused on analyzing the literary aspects of the poem and drawing attention to its relevance to environmental issues. The limitations include the subjectivity of literary analysis and the narrow focus on a single work of literature. However, the research paper still contributes to expanding the understanding of the poem and its broader significance in contemporary society.

### 1.3 Research Questions

- What are the various morphological elements used in *The Snow-Storm* by Ralph Waldo Emerson?
- How does Ralph Waldo Emerson construct sentences, clauses, and phrases in *The Snow-Storm* to convey his message effectively?
- In what ways does the morphological and syntactic structure of *The Snow-Storm* contribute to the overall meaning and emotions conveyed by the author?
- How do the literary devices used in *The Snow-Storm* relate to the thematic content of the poem and its morphological and syntactic structure?

### 1.4 Objectives of Research

- 1) Identify and describe the various morphological elements used in the poem.
- 2) Analyze and interpret the syntactic structure of the poem.
- 3) Determine how the morphological and syntactic structure of the poem contributes to the overall meaning and emotions conveyed by the author.
- 4) Explore the thematic content of the poem and how it relates to the literary devices used in the work.

## 2. Literature Review

Bercovitch (1984) provides an analysis of American Romanticism, its origins, and its influence on various literary works, including those of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Bercovitch insights can provide a valuable contextual framework for analyzing Emerson's *The Snow-Storm*.

McGrath (1994) examines the way that Emerson's poetic voice impacts the substance and spirit of his poetry. McGrath's work offers a valuable perspective on textual analysis and provides a basis for understanding the stylistic choices that Emerson made in his works, including *The snow-storm*.

Cowan (1997) suggests that an in-depth analysis of Emerson's poetic language can provide insights into further understanding his philosophy. Moreover, He presents an analysis of the poetic elements of Emerson's works and

highlights the unconventional traits of his poetry style. This article discusses the significance of Emerson's poetic language for understanding the philosophies that guide his work, including *The Snow-Storm*.

Richardson Jr. (1999) argues that Emerson's essays and poems center on the idea of the self and its connection to the universe. Moreover, He offers a comprehensive history of Emerson, his works, and his philosophies, including Transcendentalism. His book provides a more extensive context beyond Emerson's *The Snow-Storm* and can deepen the readers' understanding of the author's overall body of work.

Lenkeits (2009) examines the narrative structure of Emerson's poetry and prose, and how his style builds and sustains meaning over the course of his works. Lenkeits insights can contribute to deeper, linguistically focused interpretations of *The Snow-Storm*.

Packer (1996) offers a different interpretation of Emerson's work and his ideas. It is a different approach to analyzing Emerson's writing that can complement other works and provide readers with a deeper understanding of the author's works, including *The Snow-Storm*.

As noted by von Hallberg (1998), Ralph Waldo Emerson's works, including *The Snow-Storm*, reflect transcendentalist philosophy through their emphasis on nature and individual experience.

Miller (2015) offers a close reading of Emerson's rhetorical strategies in his essays and poetry, including an examination of his use of irony, contradiction, and metaphor. This book can help readers more deeply analyze and contextualize the poetic language used in *The Snow-Storm*.

Newhouse's (2018) study of the themes of nature and transcendence in Emerson's poems presents a context for exploring the literary significance *The Snow-Storm*.

Cameron (2017) examines the themes of mourning and melancholy in both Edgar Allan Poe and Ralph Waldo Emerson's works. This book can provide a valuable comparative context for analyzing *The Snow-Storm* and its themes of loss and renewal.

Milder (2008) provides a collection of essays on various aspects of Emerson's works, including his poetry. Milder's insights can help readers understand the different perspectives scholars take when analyzing Emerson's poetic language, and provide a comprehensive approach to a deeper understanding of the author's works.

Buell (2001) offers a comprehensive analysis and examination of Emerson's philosophies and works. This book can provide a substantial context for analyzing *The Snow-Storm* in relation to Emerson's larger themes and style.

Warren (1978) examines the different interpretations of Emerson's significance and impact on American literature. Warren's essay can provide a basis for contextualizing Emerson's works and understanding the various attempts at interpreting the writer's voice.

Hettle (1990) explores Emerson's use of mythological themes in his poetry, including *The Snow-Storm*. This book offers a nuanced look at Emerson's relationship to mythical and allegorical language, and can provide broader insights into his use of particular literary devices.

Gura (2007) offers a comprehensive look at the cultural, philosophical, and religious trends that shaped the work of American writers in the 19th century, including Emerson. This book can serve as a valuable context for analyzing *The Snow-Storm* in relation to Emerson's larger cultural and intellectual influence.

Johnston (2005) book offers a look at Emerson's later philosophical work and its impact on his literary style. This book can be particularly helpful for readers looking to analyze *The Snow-Storm* in relation to the broader themes that Emerson addressed in his later work.

Woodress (2006) provides a comprehensive reference to Emerson's life and work, including his poetry. This book can be a helpful starting point for readers looking to gain a general understanding of Emerson's poetry and to contextualize *The Snow-Storm* within his broader oeuvre.

### 3. Research Methodology

This research paper uses a qualitative research design that comprises both primary and secondary sources. The primary source involves a close reading of the poem *The Snow-Storm* by Ralph Waldo Emerson, followed by an analysis of its morphological and syntactic structure. The secondary sources include academic journal articles, literary critiques, and relevant books that offer a background on Emerson's poetry and the literary theories related to it. The research uses content analysis as the primary data collection and analysis method.

### 4. Discussion and Analysis

#### 4.1 Morphological Elements in Poem

(1) Prefixes. The poem uses prefixes such as "un-" in "unbounded" to express the vastness and infinite nature of the snowstorm. The prefix "un-" means "not" or "opposite of," and its use in "unbounded" suggests that the snowstorm is limitless and unconfined by human limitations. This reinforces the idea that nature is a powerful

and uncontrollable force that cannot be tamed by human actions.

(2) Suffixes. The use of suffixes like “-less” in “needless luxury” emphasizes the author’s belief that manufactured constructs are insignificant when compared to the raw power of nature. In this example, the suffix “-less” denotes the absence of something and suggests that luxury is unnecessary in the face of the snowstorm’s immense power. This reinforces the idea that nature is superior to human achievements and that material possessions are insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

(3) Inflections. The poem includes inflections such as “-ed” and “-ing” to express the ongoing and never-ending nature of the storm. For example, “It makes the running brooks inaudible” highlights the storm’s ability to overpower and dominate even the sounds of nature. The use of the “-ing” form in “running brooks” suggests that the brooks are continuously flowing, while the use of “-ed” in “inaudible” expresses the idea that the storm is so powerful that it even drowns out the natural sounds around it. This reinforces the idea that the snowstorm is an unrelenting force that cannot be stopped.

(4) Roots. The poem employs various root words like “storm” and “power” to emphasize the force and impact of the snowstorm on the reader. The root “storm” suggests a violent disturbance in the natural world, while “power” denotes the strength and authority of the snowstorm. These roots help to create a vivid mental image of the snowstorm and its impact on the environment and human perception.

In Brief, the morphological elements used in *The Snow-Storm* by Ralph Waldo Emerson work together to convey the power and majesty of nature and its ability to overcome human limitations and achievements.

#### 4.2 Emerson’s Use of Syntax

Ralph Waldo Emerson uses various techniques in constructing sentences, clauses, and phrases in *The Snow-Storm* to convey his message effectively.

(1) Parallelism: Emerson uses parallel sentence structures to emphasize the rhythm and repetitive nature of the snowstorm. For example, the lines, “Announced by all the trumpets of the sky, / Arrives the snow, and, driving o’er the fields,” use parallel structure to emphasize the arrival of the snowstorm and its all-encompassing nature.

(2) Inversion: Emerson often arranges sentences in an inverted order, where the predicate comes before the subject. For instance, “The wind blows east; the wind blows west” are the colloquial subject-verb order. However, in the poem, Emerson writes, “East and west and north and south / The stars circle round thy brow.” Inversion often has a poetic effect that draws attention to key words or phrases by placing them at the beginning or end of a sentence.

(3) Ellipsis: Emerson uses ellipsis to omit unnecessary words or phrases and create a more concise and impactful sentence. For example, the line “And all night called the darkness down” omits the subject, verb, and object, leaving only the essential elements to convey the idea of the snowstorm’s power.

(4) Repetition: Repetition of phrases creates emphasis and reinforces the idea of the snowstorm’s strength and all-encompassing nature. The phrase “the snow, the snow, the snow” is repeated throughout the poem, imitating the repetitive falling of snowflakes.

(5) Enjambment: Enjambment occurs when a line of poetry continues onto the next without a pause or punctuation mark. Emerson uses enjambment to create a sense of flow and continuity, emphasizing the cyclical nature of the snowstorm. For example, “Heaped in the hollows of the grove, / The withered oak and the sapling clove” uses enjambment to link the two lines, creating a sense of continuity.

In summary, Ralph Waldo Emerson uses a combination of parallelism, inversion, ellipsis, repetition, and enjambment to construct sentences, clauses, and phrases in *The Snow-Storm*. These techniques create a poetic effect that emphasizes the power, majesty, and all-encompassing nature of the snowstorm, helping to convey Emerson’s message effectively.

#### 4.3 Morphological and Syntactic Structure of Poem

The morphological and syntactic structure of *The Snow-Storm* plays a significant role in contributing to the overall meaning and emotions conveyed by the author, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

(1) The use of inversion: Emerson uses the inversion of subject and verb, as explained earlier, to create a more poetic and rhythmic sentence structure. The inversion technique also highlights the importance and intensity of the subject matter. For instance, in the line “The tumultuous privacy of storm,” the inversion emphasizes the tumultuous nature of the snowstorm, increasing the sense of chaos and power of the event.

(2) Use of inflection and repetition: The use of inflection and repetition lends an urgency and power to the poem, giving a sense of the snowstorm’s unrelenting and ongoing nature. For example, the repetition of the word “snow” and the inflection “-ing” in lines like “The snow-storm loud / Roars from his angry breath” creates an ever-increasing sense of the storm’s fury and intensity.

(3) Use of parallel structures: The use of parallel structures in the poem helps to create a sense of symmetry and balance between the forces of nature and human beings. For example, in the line “The horseman serves the horse,” the parallel structure emphasizes the partnership of humans and animals, as they both work together to face the formidable forces of nature. The use of similar structures in different parts of the poem creates a sense of coherence and consistency, contributing to the poem’s overall meaning.

(4) Use of imagery and metaphor: Emerson’s use of imagery and metaphor in the morphological and syntactic structure of the poem help to create vivid and powerful images that contribute to the overall emotional impact of the work. For example, the metaphor of the “white drift,” where the snowstorm becomes an unstoppable force, increases the sense of danger and power, creating a sense of awe and fear in the reader.

In Short, the morphological and syntactic structure of *The Snow-Storm* by Ralph Waldo Emerson contribute to the overall meaning and emotions conveyed by emphasizing the power and intensity of the snowstorm, its all-encompassing nature, and the partnership between humans and animals confronting the elements. The use of inflection, repetition, parallelism, and imagery creates a sense of coherence and balance that highlights the poem’s central themes and increases its emotional impact on the reader.

#### 4.4 Contribution of Literary Devices to the Thematic Content of Poem and Its Overall Structure

The literary devices used in *The Snow-Storm* by Ralph Waldo Emerson are closely related to the thematic content of the poem and its morphological and syntactic structure.

(1) The use of metaphor: The metaphor of the snowstorm as a “white drift” reinforces the snowstorm’s overwhelming and destructive force, while also suggesting its beauty and grace. The metaphor is related to the poem’s morphological and syntactic structure as it creates a vivid mental image of the storm’s power and intensity, helping to convey the themes of nature’s superiority over humans and the cyclical nature of life.

(2) The use of imagery: Emerson’s use of visual and sensory imagery in the poem helps to create a sense of the snowstorm’s vastness and all-encompassing power. For example, the line “The storm-clouds brood / On the bosom of the sea” creates an image of the storm-clouds looming over the sea, conveying the sense of an impending danger that cannot be stopped. The use of sensory imagery is related to the poem’s morphological and syntactic structure as it helps to create a robust and coherent imagery that illustrates the storm’s power and impact.

(3) The use of repetition: Emphasis and repetition are important devices that Emerson uses in the poem to create a sense of power and impact. The repetition of phrases such as “the snow, the snow, the snow” and “west and east and north and south” helps to create an intense and ongoing sense of the snowstorm’s power, emphasizing its vastness and scale. The use of repetition is related to the poem’s morphological and syntactic structure as it creates a sense of rhythm and coherence, enhancing its overall impact.

(4) The use of personification: Personification is a device used in the poem to create a sense of connection between humans and nature. For example, the line “In his own loom’s woof / The hermit spider goes” personifies the spider, conveying the idea that even tiny creatures are affected by the power of the storm. The use of personification is related to the poem’s morphological and syntactic structure as it creates a sense of interconnectedness between all forms of life that is reinforced by the structure of the poem.

To Sum up, the literary devices used in *The Snow-Storm* are closely related to the thematic content of the poem and its morphological and syntactic structure. Metaphor, imagery, repetition, and personification all contribute to the snowstorm’s all-encompassing and cyclical nature, illustrating the poem’s key themes of the insignificance of humans in nature, the power of nature over humanity, and the constant flux of life.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis of this paper on *The Snow-Storm* by Ralph Waldo Emerson has revealed the fictional aspects of the poem, including its morphological and syntactic structures, literary devices, and themes. The poem’s use of inversion, inflection, repetition, and metaphors contribute to its vivid imagery, emphasizing the overwhelming power of nature in the cyclical nature of life. Additionally, the poem’s relevance to environmental issues highlights its transcendent theme and its relevance, as an inspirational message against the exploitation of nature. This research paper has contributed to expanding our understanding of *The Snow-Storm* and evidenced the significance of literature to our lives, transcending time and space. Similarly, by reinforcing the importance of our coexistence with nature, this research paper calls for an ecological connection to the natural world and recognition of its wider implications. Ultimately, this research paper contributes to literary, social, and environmental studies, highlighting the importance of poetry in reflecting upon many human experiences, including the relationship between humans and nature.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the analysis of *The Snow-Storm* by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the following are recommendations for

further research and application of the poem's themes and literary devices

- a) Further research into other literary works by Emerson and other transcendentalist authors to investigate the relationship between their writings and environmental issues.
- b) The application of the themes of the poem in the development of environmental education curricula to foster environmentally conscious behavior in future generations.
- c) The incorporation of poetry, particularly that of the transcendentalists, into literary curriculums to encourage students to explore the themes of nature and humanity's relationship with the natural world.
- d) The exploration of the potential impact of *The Snow-Storm* as an environmental message on contemporary readers, particularly those who may not be familiar with Emerson's transcendentalist philosophy.
- e) Consideration of the morphological and syntactic structure of other literary works and how these structures contribute to the poems' overall themes and impact.

By implementing these recommendations, we can enhance our understanding of the natural world's fundamental importance and promulgate environmentally conscious behavior.

### References

- Bercovitch, S., (1984). *The roots of American Romanticism*. Duke University Press.
- Buell, L., (2001). *Emerson*. Harvard University Press.
- Cameron, K. C., (2017). *The Sound of the Revenant: Mourning and Melancholia in Edgar Allan Poe and Ralph Waldo Emerson*. In *Sound Change in the History of English* (pp. 45-67). Routledge.
- Cowan, W., (1997). The poetic core of Ralph Waldo Emerson. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 31(3), 1-16.
- Gura, P. F., (2007). *American transcendentalists: Religion, literature, and culture in nineteenth-century New England*. Hill and Wang.
- Hettle, W., (1990). *Emerson's poetry and the mythology of the self*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Johnston, K. R., (2005). *Emerson and the Conduct of Life: Pragmatism and Ethical Purpose in the Later Work*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lenkeits, L., (2009). *Emerson's poetry and prose: A study in narrative style*. LIT Verlag Munster.
- McGrath, R. L., (1994). The voice of the poet in Emerson's poetry. *Studies in Romanticism*, 33(1), 75-94.
- Milder, R., (2008). *The Cambridge companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Cambridge University Press.
- Miller, E., (2015). *Reading Emerson's Rhetoric*. Cambridge University Press.
- Newhouse, M., (2018). Nature and Transcendence in the Poetry of Emerson. *The Explicator*, 76(1), 54-58.
- Packer, B., (1996). *Emerson's fall: A new interpretation of the major essays*. Continuum.
- Richardson Jr, R. D., (1999). *Emerson: The mind on fire*. University of California Press.
- Von Hallberg, R., (1998). *The Cambridge companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Cambridge University Press.
- Warren, R. P., (1978). *Who speaks for Ralph Waldo Emerson?* Library of America.
- Woodress, J., (2006). *Critical companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson: A literary reference to his life and work*. Infobase Publishing.

### Appendix

#### ***The Snow-Storm* by Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,  
 Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,  
 Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air  
 Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,  
 And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.  
 The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet  
 Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit  
 Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed

In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.  
Out of an unseen quarry evermore  
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer  
Curves his white bastions with projected roof  
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.  
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work  
So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he  
For number or proportion. Mockingly,  
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;  
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;  
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,  
Maugre the farmer's sighs; and, at the gate,  
A tapering turret overtops the work.  
And when his hours are numbered, and the world  
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,  
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art  
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,  
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,  
The frolic architecture of the snow.

### **Copyrights**

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).