



**LITERATURE SELECTION** “The Burial”  
by Rudyard Kipling

**Section 1**

*Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), a British poet, novelist, and short-story writer, lived in India during the time of British imperial rule. He believed that imperialism brought important benefits to the people of Asia and Africa. In his writings, Kipling expressed the belief that the work of the British government was noble and honorable. His elegy for British financier and colonizer Cecil Rhodes, “The Burial,” echoes these sentiments. Rhodes chose for his burial site the Matoppos—or Matopo Hills—in present-day Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), a colony Rhodes founded. Why does Kipling admire Rhodes?*

(C. J. Rhodes, buried in the Matoppos, April 10, 1902)

When that great Kings return to clay,  
Or Emperors in their pride,  
Grief of a day shall fill a day,  
Because its creature died.  
But we—we reckon not with those  
Whom the mere Fates ordain,  
This Power that wrought on us and goes  
Back to the power again.

Dreamer devout, by vision led  
Beyond our guess or reach,  
The travail of his spirit bred  
Cities in place of speech.  
So huge the all-mastering thought that drove—  
So brief the terms allowed—  
Nations, not words, he linked to prove  
His faith before the crowd.  
It is his will that he look forth  
Across the world he won—  
The granite of the ancient North—  
Great spaces washed with sun.

There shall he patient take his seat  
(As when the Death he dared),

And there await a people’s feet  
In the paths that he prepared.  
There, till the vision he foresaw  
Splendid and whole arise,

And unimagined Empires draw  
To council ’neath the skies,  
The immense and brooding Spirit still  
Shall quicken and control.  
Living he was the land, and dead,  
His soul shall be her soul!

**Research Options**

1. **Using Research in Writing** Find out more about Cecil Rhodes. Then write a brief biographical sketch and share it with the class. Discuss with your classmates whether you agree with Kipling’s assessment of Rhodes in “The Burial.”
2. **Determining Word Meaning** Use a dictionary, an encyclopedia, or a handbook of literary terms to find a definition of *elegy*. Then discuss with your classmates whether it was appropriate for Kipling to write an elegy about Cecil Rhodes.