Wallace Stevens has been cast by his peers and critics as many different things: philosopher, thinking man’s poet, phenomenologist, and others. While it would be naïve and unfair to Stevens to attempt to classify his poetry as simply one of the above, none of these labels are completely wrong; he was all of these, and more, combined into one spectacular writer.

The most striking element of Stevens’ poetry, however, is the definite existentialist undertones that thread their way throughout his poetry. In poems such as “The Man with the Blue Guitar,” “The Death of a Soldier,” and “The Emperor of Ice-Cream,” among others, Stevens consistently alludes to the inherently (though misleading) purpose-less existence that lies at the core of the post-modernist mindset. Not only that, but in placing the responsibility of devising a meaning for life on the shoulders of each individual, Stevens finds an element of liberation that many readers miss in their interpretations of existentialism.