

The Rope The Rope that Bartley uses to make a halter for his horse is yet another symbol of death. The rope resembles a noose, an instrument of execution, and Synge further associates the rope with death through Maurya's statement that they might need the rope to lower Michael's body into a grave. Significantly, Maurya says this in the context of fighting to keep Bartley from going on the sea where she believes he will die. By telling Barley not to take the rope in case Michael's body washes up, she is really telling him that he can't halter his horse and therefore can't go to the seashore—Maurya and Bartley's conflict over the rope, then, is a conflict over his life. When Bartley takes the rope (by then a clear symbol of death), it becomes even more obvious that his fate is sealed. The rope also highlights the difficulty of the family's survival in another context: the pig tries to eat it, which calls attention to the family's hunger. While the rope is associated with Bartley and Michael's deaths on the sea, the rope's association with the pig suggests a different bleak fate for the women, especially since they cannot provide for themselves now that the men are gone.