

# Robert Frost - Poetry | Notes Set

- American poet
- Experienced Trauma- many people he was close to died...influenced his poetry.
- Strong settings are a feature of Frost's style.

## Acquainted with the Night

- Strong features of Frost's style in this poem – Short and Autobiographical.
- A cyclical poem – Sense of a journey being endured and is now over.
- Poem is without dispute dealing with melancholy.
- Repetition is always significant in poetry – “acquainted with the night” is repeated in the most powerful places; title, first line and last line... reiteration.
- ‘Acquainted’ is hugely significant. An acquaintance is someone that you know but don't have a deep knowledge of. Frost knows of melancholy but it is not an intimate or lasting relationship... his life has not been dominated by it.
- ‘Night’ has a symbolic significance- Lack of lights which represents hope.
- First 5 lines use the personal pronoun ‘I’ – He is not trying to disguise anything, this is Frost's life. Feeling of authenticity as in a depressed state of mind you are stuck perpetually on yourself.
- “I have been” – sense of having moved beyond this state of mind.
- Line 3 – In the depths of depression, it can be bad.  
Isolation- how far removed he felt from people and normality.... “city” represents people “furthest” and “saddest” – hyperbole for emphasis.
- “dropped my eyes”- a sense of embarrassment or guilt... emasculated and ashamed of how he is feeling... inability and unwillingness to share his feeling with others.
- “call me back or say goodbye” feels anonymous, unwanted, insignificant.
- Picture of Frost looking up at moon in the sky... “unearthly height” – he feels small and powerless. As this image progresses it becomes more positive and the moon is compared to a clock – a reference to the passage of time... through time this sadness will pass.

### Setting

Dark, night,  
cityscape - Artificial  
and unnatural

- Positive view of poem – his melancholy is a journey he has now moved beyond.
- Negative view- Darkness is ever present.

## The Road Not Taken

- Heavy on imagery
- Use of a dash for emphasis.
- Tone is confident and pragmatic, less emotive.
- An honest and positive poem.

Setting Woods-  
 Natural and aesthetically pleasing.  
 Enthusiasm of youth is natural.  
 “Yellow” – warm, bright colour.  
 “Woodland” - Serenity

### Stanza 1

- Sense of Frost’s personality in the Title – he is never completely at ease/happy with the choices that he makes... may be a contributing factor to his melancholy in Acquainted with the Night.
- Accurately captures what it is like to be young- want to experience as much as possible.
- Frost is contemplative with a balanced mindset.
- Images of looking down a path as far as possible – metaphorically you can’t see the implications of something on your life as a whole- Frost being pragmatic.

### Stanza 2

- Attributable to youth – desire to do something different and not follow the crowd.
- He then contradicts this; we are all the same.
- Mix of Older Frost, a little cynical and of Younger Frost, optimistic.

### Stanza 3

- Image of aesthetically beautiful plants- fresh, clean, appealing – He is remembering when his life was like this and was not overcome by trials and tribulations.
- ‘!’ reinforces the upbeat tone of this poem.

### Stanza 4

- “somewhere ages and ages hence” – confidence of youth that old age is a long way away.
- Authentic investigation of a young person’s mindset.

- “I-I” – pride, wants us to focus on him, can admire him for wearing his heart on his sleeve.
- “and sorry I could not travel both” wanted to experience everything, an innate desire for life to have meaning... youthful ambition.

## Out, Out

### Setting

Beautiful vista,  
natural beauty, idyllic  
environment  
“sunset” warm and  
beautiful view

- Poem is an anecdote about a tragic incident on a rural small-holding.... a young boy dies after a tragic accident with a chainsaw.
- No stanzas in the poem...add to the anecdotal and story-like feel.
- Personification of the saw – “snarled and rattled” – onomatopoeia, threatening image.
- “sweet scented stuff” alliteration to highlight warm and happy domestic environment.
- “and nothing happened” ordinary and mundane day-to-day work on this farm.
- Things could so easily have been different – “call it a day...”  
Recognisable human response to a tragic accident.
- Frost wants us to feel empathy for the boy – He is represented a young, hardworking, “big boy doing a man’s work” and a part of a happy family who work together... universal recognition to his poem.
- Humanisation of the boy through Frost’s use of the word “supper” – an informal and warm word.
- The saw is personified to create the sense that sometimes these things are beyond our control.
- “rueful laugh” first reaction to horror is always disbelief.
- Frost uses direct speech for empathy – this is a man who has experienced trauma and loss... he writes this anecdote as he understands.
- “pulse took fright” sense of shock and disbelief that this has happened... tragedy invading the idyllic, homely, ordinary environment described at the beginning of the poem.
- Point where the boy dies, Frost writes about the final 3 beats of his heart – an intimate poem for the reader as we are there when he dies... we hear his heart stop.
- Frost reminds us of the future the young boy has lost, his youth is suggested by “build”... he has lost the chance to ‘build’ himself into a proper adult.

- Last line is not uncaring or offhand, it is the voice of experience... only option when things go bad is to get on with things.
- Poem is an intrusion of tragedy onto normal life – it is swift, sudden and absolute.
- It is a cautionary poem.. tragedy could happen to anyone at any time.
- Frost wrote the poem as it relates to the unforeseen tragedies he faced in his life – personal.

## Provide, Provide

- Frost fear of loneliness, disregard, irrelevant and isolation in the latter stages of his life.
- Title – A call to action, a warning to us to retain our relevance and importance.
- Cautionary Poem
- Universal Quality
- Hyperbole for emphasis and Rhyme
  
- “Abishag” was famed for her beauty.
- “witch and withered” highlights the effects of ageing and time, all of her power has been reduced to nothing.
- Hollywood represents youth, glamour and good-looks; Frost is cynical about this.
- He is talking directly to us “you” – warning us that the great and good will suffer in old age in a reversal of circumstance – possibly skewed by his own experiences.
  
- Frost’s use of the word “predestined” is interesting – He is implying the everything is in the hands of fate – a coping strategy of Frost is to put trials and tribulations in the hands of fate.
- Expression of a desire to be remembered “in state”.
- America is a capitalist society and Frost sees the value of wealth – you will remain dignified, of relevance and power.
  
- “Throne” represents royalty and dignity, it is associated with remaining powerful.
- “Crone” is a witch symbol, it is a word associated with age and disregard.
- More cynicism in the word “might” – honesty, endeavour and good intentions are no protection, the high points in your life will not sustain you in later life. From this we can suspect that Frost is struggling – he is finding the latter stages of his life difficult as he has lost his relevance. He fears loneliness and disregard.
  
- Out, Out and Provide, Provide have similarities – Frost’s own experience in life becomes relevant to them and they are both motivated at the heart by fear.

# Design

- Fate is the dominant theme... It is also a reoccurring theme in Frost's poetry.
- Images of nature throughout.
- Poem is linked with death.
- Title – suggestion that something has been pre-planned; designed.
  
- Right from the opening there is a sense of things being out of place.
  - a “white spider” is unusual
  - “heal – all” is a typically blue flower, not white as it is in the poem
  - this creates a sense of nature being out of balance; not quite right.
- Moth is described in a simile - “rigid” lack of movement and death (in life moths move constantly)
- Repetition of “white” 3 times is significant – pale and lifeless colour.
  
- Sense that life and death are one big drama from Frost's use of the word “character” – promoting his theory that in life things are planned out for us , we are ‘characters’ in our own life.
- “broth” Represents a cauldron and spells – things are beyond our control in life.
- Line 7/8 - another simile to demonstrate the fragility of life....consciousness is very fragile.
  
- Stanza 1 – picture is created.
- Stanza 2 – reaction and reflection.
- Stanza 3 – considering deeper implications of what he has observed... What were the chances of the spider and moth being on the same flower at the same time? If circumstances had changed slightly the death may not have happened.
  
- Frost directly states that fate is design.
- He is terrified by this and the implications that fate can have; “appal”

## Spring Pools

- Age is the central theme.
- Elements of Frost's fear of ageing/growing old... also seen in Provide, Provide.
- Natural imagery throughout the poem- appropriate for the theme of age as we age naturally.
- Similar structure to Design – observation then reflection.
- Title – Spring is the calm before the growth of summer, preparation for a season of rapid growth.

### Opening 4 Lines

- Image of smooth pools of water, calm and bright – A picture perfect scene.
- “total sky” represents openness, possibility and freedom.
- Flowers are usually a positive image but “chill” and “shiver” cast a shadow over the positive opening – They are words that convey coldness and worry.
- “soon be gone” ageing will occur, it is inevitable.
  
- **Line 5 and 6** - The end of these spring pools won't be elegant...swiftly devoured by roots=fast and unpleasant.
- Negative thing- “dark foliage” – new growth is at the expense of what is already there...Frost's fear of being usurped by the younger generations.
- “pent up” suggest the energy, enthusiasm and ambition of youth.  
The trees aren't bare, thus preventing light from entering... next generation will overshadow the current.
- The poem is a metaphorical fear of disregard and of becoming invisible for Frost.
  
- Winter seems like “only yesterday” to Frost – human reaction; in the blink of an eye the natural cycle of life continues.